

**A STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
MALAWI**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine institutional autonomy as it was operationalized in the University of Malawi. Specifically, the study focussed on University of Malawi's (UNIMA) autonomy in the post multi-party political climate of the country. Research questions were designed based upon James' (1965) *elements* of university autonomy, Ashby's (1966) *ingredients* of institutional autonomy, areas to be protected for institutional autonomy (Ajayi et al., 1996) and McDaniel's (1996) *components* of governance.

Six groups of research questions, which included governance, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters were used as interview guides in the data collection exercise. The findings of the study were examined and interpreted through a framework adapted from Govindaraj et al. (1996): *Hospital Autonomy in Ghana* and McDaniel's (1996): *The paradigms of governance in higher education systems*.

UNIMA, the only university in Malawi (1965 – 1998), has five constituent colleges with a central administrative office. The researcher made field visits to all the five colleges and the central office and collected data by means of interviews and document review. This formed the internal players. As external players also have an impact upon university autonomy, the four groups that the researcher interviewed were the government, regulatory bodies, politicians, and a public university. Out of a total of 44 interviews, 32 respondents were from *internal* groups and 12 respondents were from *external* groups. In addition, some data for the study were also drawn from university documents and publications, local newspapers, and periodicals.

It was shown in this study, that since the founding of UNIMA in 1965, Government took much interest and intervened in the activities of the then only institution of higher learning in the country, imposing its control on the running of the institution. Since the emergence of multiparty politics in 1994, the role of government has been moving from *state authority* towards *market control* as a result of the liberalization of the education sector. The amount of autonomy UNIMA had gained compared to the pre-1994 situation was notable and was increasing as government was progressively decentralizing decisions to UNIMA.

Malawi is facing a rapid expansion of the higher education sector as a result of the liberalization of the education sector, evidenced by the introduction of four new private universities since 1994. The findings point to a need for the establishment of the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), to act as a buffer body between government and higher education institutions. It is also necessary to revisit the university constitution to change the provision of appointing Head of State to also be the chancellor of the university. The current heavy dependence on governmental funding is not sustainable and UNIMA should be encouraged to diversify the generation of revenue through alternative sources.

Since the autonomy of UNIMA was in transition, the researcher suggests that longitudinal studies be made to ascertain the variables that might have changed over a given period. Further studies were also suggested to investigate the issue of autonomy in selected African universities and to compare these with UNIMA's experience. Such studies could be extended to Western universities.

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DEDICATION

To my late Dad and late Mom, Bambo Milanzi and Mai Anambewe.

My Dad, a jovial man; my Mom, a compassionate woman.

They planted the seed years ago and though it has taken so long, this is the fruition.

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CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the general background, the research context, and purpose of the study is presented, followed by the statement of the problem and the research questions that guided the study. In addition, the significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, researcher context, and operational definitions are described. Finally, the organization of the dissertation is outlined.

1.2 Background to the Study

Barber (2001) defined a university as “an educational institution designed for instruction of students in many branches of advanced learning, conferring degrees in various faculties” (p. 1588). Universities have evolved in different ways over time as interaction has continued between them and their social environments. Clarke, Hough, and Stewart (1984) pointed out that, from their beginning, universities took on the functions of the following:

- preparing people for the professions by giving them a full and wide-based education
- providing suitable conditions for teaching and research to be carried out in a climate of free inquiry so that teachers and students could vigorously pursue their own insights and ideas in the cause of enlightenment for its own sake
- enabling a community of scholars to critically evaluate the intellectual standards and development of society (p. 26).

In summary, the fundamental roles of the university are to *preserve, transmit, and extend knowledge*. Karmel (1990) observed that, over the years, these fundamental roles of the university had not changed. However, Clarke et al. (1984) noted that while the roles had not changed, the functions associated with the fundamental roles were modified because of the interdependence and interrelatedness of the other sub-systems in the particular community and the wider society in which it operated.

1.2.1 External Influence

McDaniels, (1996) observed that institutions of higher learning (universities) around the world functioned under the spotlight of various constituencies of influence and interest. He stated that “besides the general influence of society (including particular sectors such as trade and industry), institutions are more concretely and directly influenced by governments (or agencies operating on behalf of governments) that can penetrate deep into the academic organization” (p. 137). Snyder (2002) argued that institutions of higher learning have never been isolated ivory towers: they have always served their societies. In turn, “society has supported these institutions in the belief that, by preserving, discovering, and transmitting knowledge, they serve the common good and advance the status of humanity” (p. 2).

Moor (as cited by McDaniels, 1996) noted:

No country in the world has a government which does not retain some control over its universities. In continental Europe, in particular, the various governments are responsible for the total of higher education effort of their countries, including the ways in which universities serve society, not simply for the provision of resources. The question, therefore, is not whether governments should have some control over universities, but rather, how much control and where it should be exercised. (p. 140)

The power exercised by governments may severely affect the governance of universities, and this is a matter of severe criticism by many academicians. Neave and Van Vught (1994) acknowledged that “detailed government planning, oversight and control [of universities] persisted in many countries up to the second half of the last decade... and in some, it remains so” (p. 246). This action negatively affects the operational independence of universities, especially those on the African continent. Experience has shown that government’s involvement in higher learning institutions is mostly through finance. This aspect is discussed in the next section.

1.2.1.1 Financial influence

The Higher Education in Developing Countries (HEDC) Report (2002) pointed out that many of the problems involving higher education were rooted in a lack of resources, especially funding. As a result, most public universities were highly dependent on central governments for their financial resources. According to the report, the provider of financing can undermine the autonomy of the university, with major sponsors trying to influence the activities of higher education institutions.

Addae- Mensah (1999) commented that in many African countries, universities had for a long time depended on governments for virtually all their needs. Single institutions, such as the state (for public universities) or a religious entity (for private universities), tended to contribute a large share of requested funding. The government also controlled tuition fees and budgets, “which must typically be approved by government officials, who may have little understanding of higher education in general, of the goals and capabilities of a particular university or of its local context in which it operates” (HEDC Report, 2002, p. 2). Clarke et al. (1984) argued:

The economic recession...has given governments the opportunity to achieve greater control over social systems than has been sought by them during periods of full employment. As part of this general move, the university system ...has been brought under much closer examination than before. (p. 23)

It can be argued, therefore, that the freedom of a university to decide on how it will be administered is compromised, in part, by the lack of financial resources. The government considers the university to be providing a public service to the citizens and it [government] sees its influencing role as necessary in an effort to ensure that the universities provide the best services to the citizens.

1.2.2 Accountability

Higher education institutions must be accountable to their sponsors, whether public or private. Since government funds the university, the use of public funds calls for accountability. Debreczeni (2002) pointed out that “at the heart of accountability was the task of ‘rendering an account’ of institutional activities in terms of their value for money” (p. 4). Neave and Van Vught (1994) noted that few universities object to the government’s right to know how effectively tax payers’ money was used since governments provide the bulk of university funds. However, “contention arises as to the intensity of government control, the mechanism used, and how they may impinge on institutional autonomy” (Richardson & Fielden, 1997, p. 8).

Elton, (as cited in McDaniels, 1996) pointed out that “[the university] will be expected to give an increasingly detailed account of the results of their actions to the government, and the extent to which they will retain any significant freedom is at present quite uncertain” (p. 138). Richardson and Fielden (1997) stated that “universities were being widely squeezed more and more in terms of both resources provided and accountabilities and controls imposed on them” (p. 8). Without financial

independence, autonomy cannot be fully exercised. Siwela (1999) summarized by observing that autonomy and accountability were inseparable when an institution was dependent on public funds, for which the government had to account.

1.2.3 University Governance

According to Nyborg (2003), higher education governance in most Anglophone countries in Africa relates to “issues such as the relationship between the State and the institution, between academic self-governance and the participation of external representatives in institutional governing bodies, between the university and its constituent faculties” (p. 1). The governance of universities is legally provided for in the Acts of Parliament and Statutes that established them. Universities are governed by University Councils, whose composition and mandate is defined in the Act. Saint (as cited in Ajayi et al., 1996) summarized university governance structures across Sub-Saharan Africa as follows:

They are generally derived from the institutional models of higher education established by former colonial administrations, although they have often been modified in practice by national political philosophies and associated approaches to development administration. Within the anglophone countries, universities are normally quasi-statutory organizations created by an Act of the National Parliament. In most anglophone countries, the Head of State or government also serves as Chancellor of the university. The Vice-Chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the institution. Responsibility for institutional policy decisions resides with a University Council, whose membership is normally drawn from government, the university, and (less commonly) organizations from the private sector. Academic affairs are managed by the University Senate, which possesses full responsibility for this. Teaching is organized through faculties, departments and specialized schools or institutes. In most cases, deans of faculties are elected, although heads of department tend to be appointed. (p. 177)

Several aspects mentioned in the above quote are explored further in Chapter 2 when the university government structures are discussed and in Chapter 4, when the structure of the University of Malawi is discussed. Siwela (1999) observed:

Some universities have moved away to a situation where the Head of State is no longer the Chancellor and where the membership of Council is not biased heavily towards government representation. This provides for institutional autonomy as it reduces State interference in the running of the university. (p. 2)

Despite this development, government can still intervene in a number of ways, “including the funding to institutions’ approved expenditure, especially in the areas of personal emoluments and capital development” (Siwela, 1999, p. 6). Stevenson (2004) noted that “tension between government and universities include proper regulation of public monies invested in public institutions and proper distancing of government from universities to allow universities pursue what they know best” (p. 1). Stevenson recommended striking a proper balance between autonomy and reasonable accountability of universities for public funds that sustain much of their activity.

1.2.4 Institutional Autonomy

Government actions are often described in terms of an attack on higher education or pictured as a vast intrusion into academic affairs. The power exercised by governments has been a matter of severe criticism. According to McDaniels (1996), the development of government influence inspired the World University Services to formulate the Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy on Institutions of Higher Education in 1988, to protect institutions against “a tendency that loomed up in the sphere of higher education to undermine, restrict or suppress academic freedom and university autonomy” (p. 138).

Debreczeni (2002) defined institutional autonomy can as “that condition which permits an institution of highest education to govern itself without external interference”

(p. 2). According to Debreczeni:

Institutional autonomy implies that the university enjoys freedom from government regulation in respect of the internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal management of financial resources, in the generation of income from non public sources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study and finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research. (p. 2)

Debreczeni further pointed out that, in practice, no higher education system was wholly free from external control; it was rather a “boundary condition between university, government and society, which is capable of being modified, redefined, and new conditions enforced as price of its continuation” (p. 2). Nyborg (2003) described autonomy as “the overall ability of the institution to act by its own choices in pursuit of its mission” (p. 2).

While institutions of higher learning seek autonomy, Magrath (as cited in Snyder, 2002), observed:

Autonomy is relative. What colleges and universities should seek is reasonable, not absolute autonomy. Total autonomy, total independence and separation from society, is simply impossible. The degree of an institution’s autonomy varies according to the nature of its relationships. It is most useful to think of multiple autonomies or degrees of autonomy. (p. 1)

Similarly, Jansen (2004) suggested that the autonomy pursued by universities “will naturally lie between two extremes: complete government control and supervision, and complete autonomy and independence of institutions. Exactly where universities find themselves between these two extreme points is crucial for their intellectual vitality and academic freedom” (p. 1).

Nyborg (2003) commented on the connection between autonomy and accountability by stating that “greater autonomy for higher education institutions means greater accountability relating to budgets, appointments, student intake, degrees awarded, ...quality of teaching and research” (p. 2). In terms of being accountable to society, Berdhl (1990) noted that universities needed autonomy to develop and be accountable to society to meet the needs of social development. To survive, a university had to have the stability to sustain the ideals of a university, while at the same time responding to society which supported it. There was a need to balance the two as “too much autonomy may lead to the university being unresponsive to society and too much accountability may destroy the necessary ethos” (Berdhl, 1990, p. 170).

1.2.5 Summary

In this section, a general overview of the university was introduced, including the role of the university (to preserve, transmit, and extend knowledge), the influences on the university, especially from government due to the funding the university receives from government, and the need for the universities’ accountability to the tax-payers. A short discussion on university governance was followed by a brief description institutional autonomy. In the next section, the research context is discussed.

1.3 Research Context

Addae-Mensah (1999) argued that the direct consequence of over-dependence of African universities on their governments had resulted in a number of problems, stating: Dwindling subventions and financial support bases, frequent shut-down of universities as a result of student demonstrations either against government policies or in protest against universities to reduce their over-dependence on government through selective

attempts at introducing fees, deteriorating infrastructure due to lack of funds, overcrowding in universities due to unrealistic government admission policies imposed on universities, leading to fall in quality, and constant conflicts between government and university. (p. 6) The picture painted by Addae-Mensah was a common feature in a number of universities in Africa, including the University of Malawi.

Felt (2002) argued that the notion of autonomy was central to the debate on the reform of universities for centuries and pointed out:

It [autonomy] was perceived as the key element that would allow for the transformation of the institution from the inside and guarantee the freedom of research and teaching...This would mean the ability to make independent decisions on the limits of institutional commitment in certain topics and areas,...and assume responsibility for the decisions taken and possible effects on society. (p.13)

Thus, according to Mahony (1992), autonomy was necessary for the maintenance of university's unique position in society.

Frackmann (1994) documented some developments in European higher education institutions in connection with institutional autonomy, which included the transfer of the decision making from the government level to the institutional level. In addition, whereas European higher education used to be financed almost totally by central or local governments and decisions made increasingly on the governmental level, government stepped back and the higher education institutions decided. According to Frackmann, government and the public expected that the more decisions were made at the base of research and education, the more they led to efficient and effective use of resources and achievement of research and educational goals. To be able to achieve this, Frackmann suggested that in higher education, institutions should be provided with the right to decide on their own:

- what programmes to be offered
- about the curriculum, course structure, examination regulations
- about personnel recruitment and salaries
- specialization of organizational structure and institutional decision making
- student intake
- tuition fees
- etc. (p. 1)

It would be a welcome development if Malawi embraced similar changes, where government stepped back and allowed UNIMA to decide on its best way forward, making the University more autonomous than before.

Ekong (1996) observed that the commonly accepted thinking in much of Africa seemed to be that since the university was a key instrument of national development, and that government was the most important source of university funding, government had both the right and duty to directly control the university including its policies, programmes, and personnel. Dlamini (1997) partly concurred with Ekong and observed:

The greatest single factor which has accounted for the limited autonomy is the fact that governments all over the world have come to be responsible for a significant portion of funding of universities. Implicit in this funding has been an expectation of loyalty to the government. Governments have felt justified to stipulate certain conditions to the giving of subsidies. (pp. 3 – 4)

However, government involvement in the internal matters of the university is not positively viewed by all the university community. Allowing universities to function independently, despite the financial support, would contribute to the efficiency of these institutions of higher education (Bjarnason S. & Lund H., 1999).

Nyborg (2003) suggested looking at all dimensions of the state-institutional relationship, such as laws and regulations, budgets for teaching and research, accountability, appointments and informal political and administrative relations in order to find out how far a university enjoys autonomy in relation to the state and whether the

relationship departs from a proper balance of interests. Nyborg further noted that autonomy, with respect to the State, was only part of the total picture of institutional autonomy; universities were increasingly subject to pressures from other sources, such as market forces, competition for standards and staff, and commercial interests in commissioned research. In this study of autonomy at UNIMA, several of these areas will be explored.

1.3.1 The African Context

In the context of Africa, Cabal (1991) recorded that university expansion in Africa was very recent compared to Western universities. Most African universities were established in the 1960's and early 1970's, shortly after the countries attained their independence (Siwela, 1999). Ekong (1996) argued that the university was a key element in the development of the countries of Africa.

In the run-up to or shortly after independence, a university was usually one of the indispensable institutions which was set up in most of the countries where there was none that had already been established by the outgoing colonial administration. Everywhere the establishment of the university was celebrated as an event of major national significance because universities were seen as a principal instrument for national development and their tasks were first to produce the qualified human resources to run the administration and professions in the newly independent countries; and second to generate and apply relevant research for the development of their countries. (p. 1)

Siwela (1999) argued that while the accepted fact that many African universities were initially created to train human resources to run the administration and the professions in the newly independent countries, this need had now been surpassed by the need for Africa to stimulate economic growth so that Africa can work its way out of poverty. Universities need to contribute to this noble cause.

These universities, according to Amonoo-Neizer (1998), were “European models transplanted to Africa and were thus alien to the social structure, thereby creating problems later” (p. 1). The challenge, especially for African universities modeled after their colonial masters, has been how to secure, defend, and protect academic freedom and institutional autonomy as defined by practices in continental Europe (Ajayi et al., 1996).

Dlamini (1997) observed that from the inception of the universities in the Middle Ages, both academic freedom and institutional autonomy were regarded as the cornerstones of the university system; regarded as a means to generation and dissemination of knowledge, teaching and research, “an inseparable whole which sets the university apart from the other institutions that teach or do research” (p. 2)

Sall and Mangu (2005) noted that, without academic freedom and institutional autonomy, universities failed to fulfill some of their primary functions, like helping societies respond to challenges of development and globalization and societal needs. According to Juma (2005), universities had to enjoy greater autonomy from State control, so as to adapt in a timely manner to a rapidly changing world. Universities required greater autonomy from government, particularly in financial administration, if they were to become more entrepreneurial (Saint, 1992).

Among the 12 declarations at a conference on the African Universities in the Third Millennium (2001), one declaration specified:

While recognizing accountability of African universities to various stakeholders including governments, African universities should be in a position to fulfil their mission and fundamental obligation to the people of Africa and to the world community, and for this to be possible, a large measure of institutional autonomy was critical. (p. 1)

Jansen (2004) commented on how government (the State) control and the autonomy of the university were related:

It [the relationship] will always be a contested one because the State finances universities while its expectations about what universities should deliver in response to such patronage are subject to change. At the same time, the universities retain the view that the pursuit of truth requires minimal external interference despite State financing of the enterprise. (p. 1)

Debreczeni (2002) viewed the understanding of institutional autonomy in more detail:

It [institutional autonomy] implies that the university enjoys freedom from government regulation in respect of the internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal management of financial resources, in the generation of income from non public sources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study and finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research. (p. 2)

Having defined institutional autonomy as “that condition which permits an institution of higher education to govern itself without external interference” (p. 2), Debreczeni (2002) pointed out that while this was true in theory, in practice, no higher education system was wholly free from external control.

1.3.2 The Study

This study was concerned with only the governance and institutional autonomy issues of the University of Malawi; academic freedom, though it was mentioned, did not form part of the study.

Several questions raised by Addae-Mensa (1999) guided this study:

- Is it really possible for an African University to operate as an *independent* institution?
- Is an independent university the best system to cater for and meet the aspirations of the people of Africa?
- Does Africa need to pursue the ideals of *academic freedom* and *autonomy* without due regard for the broader issues of society's needs?
- Do independence [autonomy] and academic freedom necessarily connote absolute and total absence of any involvement of governments in the affairs of universities?

- Can an African university be autonomous and independent of any societal control and still be able to respond to the demands of their impoverished populations and the advent of globalization during the next millenium? (p. 1)

Dlamini (1997) also observed that there were some skeptics who argued that an institution that was subsidized by the government could not claim any autonomy from government control in line with the saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

1.4 Motivation for Proposing the Study

The significant reason underlying the need to grant autonomy to UNIMA arose from the financial problems that the institution was facing in the early 1990's. For many years, UNIMA's financial operations were characterized by uncertain source of funding both in magnitude and timing. In recent years, UNIMA was faced with financial constraints and dwindling government funding. In most cases, UNIMA did not get what they budgeted and requested from government. This resulted, among other things, in the inability of the constituent colleges to effectively perform their functions as per the mission of the university. UNIMA, the oldest and most established institution of higher learning in Malawi still had to contain challenges such as development of new facilities, re-equipment of laboratories and machinery, rehabilitation of the physical infrastructure and the creation of an environment conducive to staff retention.

As a result, UNIMA failed to guarantee the desired quality of education. In order to improve financing and the cash flow position, (which would hopefully lead to improved quality of education), UNIMA needed autonomy to generate funds, such as charging competitive tuition fees, to supplement government funding. However government did not allow UNIMA to implement this option. Ideally, a more comprehensive and lasting solution was to be found in order to reduce UNIMA's

financial difficulties. UNIMA, as an institution of higher learning, needed to operate autonomously without government intervention while bearing in mind that it was a public institution.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine institutional autonomy as it was operationalized in the University of Malawi. Specifically, the study focused on UNIMA's autonomy in the post multi-party political climate in Malawi, and paid special attention to three levels: the University Council, the University (Central) Office, and the constituent colleges/departments.

1.5.1 The research questions

The autonomy of UNIMA was conceptually viewed to be influenced by both internal infrastructure and external agencies. The internal infrastructure included the University Office machinery and functioning of the constituent colleges, while the external agencies were those bodies outside the university, who influenced its operations but were not directly involved in the day-to-day running of the University. Research questions were set for both internal infrastructure and external agencies.

1.5.1.1 Internal data sources

The question of autonomy is a grand question, and since it was quite broad, it needed a focus. As will be expanded in Chapter 2 on the review of the literature on autonomy: James' (1965) elements of university autonomy, Ashby's (1966) ingredients of institutional autonomy, Ajayi's et al., (1996) list of areas to be protected for institutional autonomy, McDaniel's (1996) components of governance, and Frazier's (1997) attributes of higher institutions assisted in delimiting the research question to six

main areas namely: government involvement in decision making in UNIMA, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters.

Specifically, the questions that were addressed are:

1. Government involvement in UNIMA governance: To what extent is the Government involved in the decision-making in UNIMA in relation to: membership and control of governing council of UNIMA; and membership and control of academic boards? What is the perception of the university personnel regarding the relationship between government and the University?
2. Administrative matters: To what extent is the Government involved in student selection? ...closure and amalgamation of departments?...determination of title of awards?...length of courses? ...duration of academic year? ...university rules and regulation?
3. Financial matters: What is the extent of the University's power to set levels of tuition and other fees?...to distribute funds allocated by the Government?...determination of the University budget?...delimit the capacity to raise additional funding?...approval of major capital expenditure?...determination of financial aid to students?
4. Personnel affairs: To what extent does the University have autonomy in the appointment and dismissal of the vice-chancellor?...appointment and dismissal of senior academic and administrative members of staff?...other academic and administrative staff?...determination of pay and condition of service?...granting academic ranks to faculty members?

5. Academic affairs: How much autonomy does the University have in determining the academic disciplines and programmes?...selection of textbooks?...methods of teaching?...students' entry standards?...accreditation of higher education institutions?...maintenance of quality standards?...determination of research priorities;...research topics?...approval of publications?
6. Student affairs: To what extent does the University have freedom regarding student enrollment?...methods of selection and admission of students?...discipline of students?...entry standards?

These research questions dealt with how UNIMA internally functioned. However, UNIMA's autonomy was also influenced by external factors.

1.5.1. 2 External data sources

Different sets of questions were set for those organizations that were considered to influence the autonomy of UNIMA from outside the university structure. Specifically, the areas that were addressed included:

- The role played by the organization in Malawi
- The connection between the organization and UNIMA and whether or not the organization had any closer relationship with any of the UNIMA constituent colleges
- The role the organization can play to improve the quality of programmes run by UNIMA
- The characterization of the relationship between the organization and UNIMA
- The extent of the influence of the organization to the operations of UNIMA.

The set of both *internal* and *external* research questions are outlined in Appendix F (Interview Guides). The questions were aimed at discovering the extent of UNIMA's institutional autonomy in its operations.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In the present Malawi, two political eras can be identified: the era before and the era after the multiparty system of government in 1994, which ended the 30 years of the one-party rule of Dr. Kamuzu Banda in Malawi. As Kerr and Mapanje (2002) pointed out:

During the anticolonial struggle, young nationalists conceived the University of Malawi as a potential engine for the transformation and development of the State. After independence, President Banda, who established a repressive one-party State, severely restricted the University's intellectual autonomy through modalities of censorship. Some academics and students went into exile; others conformed to the dominant ideology; others resisted it furtively. Global pressures on both the University and the entire political economy of Malawi contributed to the triumph of prodemocracy movements in overthrowing the Banda regime. After the victory of the United Democratic Front government in 1994, many restrictions on intellectual freedom were lifted. (p. 73)

This quote succinctly summarizes some of the politically *dirty* stories before 1994. In the new dispensation, Malawians have been experiencing some freedom in a number of aspects, including the press, speech, and association. The running of the University, which was previously under the watchful eye of the Government, has now some freedom of operation, albeit not in all areas. This is a giant step in the right direction. In the pre-1994 era, both academicians and administrators in the university community were subjected to similar traumatic, political experiences and the current extent of this freedom was of interest to both the academicians and administrators in UNIMA as expressed by one administrator:

There should be nothing that should stop you from carrying out research on the subject of institutional autonomy of the University of Malawi. All of us will be delighted to learn from whatever findings you will come up with. In fact, it is time for Malawians to undertake such type of research in our higher institutions of learning. (University Office, 2004)

Despite an increasing amount of literature on African higher education reform, few systematic studies have been done on Malawi, by either the Western scholars or even the African (including Malawian) scholars. Under the one-party rule, university governance was seldomly discussed openly as it would be regarded as criticizing the behaviour of the Kamuzu Banda regime (government). This would have been viewed as a political warrant for detention. The current relaxed political atmosphere since 1994 (from one-party to multi-party system of government) provides a window of opportunity to engage in the study.

The empirical evidence derived from this study should reveal characteristic features of UNIMA governance and help both Malawian and Western scholars to understand the functioning of the higher education system in Malawi given the current political dispensation. In this way, the study makes a substantial addition to the primary database in the Western and African literature on Malawian higher education, which would not have been possible prior to 1994.

In terms of higher education research in Malawi, this study was one of a few major investigations that have been undertaken. A Malawi national undertook the study and used western literature theories on higher education to analyze the phenomenon (institutional autonomy) as evidenced in the University of Malawi. As a result, the study helped to reveal the extent of the applicability (or otherwise) of the western literature theories on the nature of institutional autonomy of an African university. The findings

of this study were also useful in providing the Western scholars with description of some aspects of the Malawian higher education reforms during the transition period that started in 1994. It should provide Malawian policy makers with a source of reference for planning reform policies relating to higher education in Malawi.

1.7 Assumptions

This study was based on a number of underlying assumptions.

1. It was assumed that the degree of autonomy a university has is identifiable, as indicated by the six research questions and cited in the University Act and Statutes.
2. It was assumed that the opinions of the key UNIMA actors, both from within and outside the university community, would provide sufficient insight into the nature (and degree) of institutional autonomy of UNIMA.
3. It was assumed that the respondents in the study had the requisite information that would appropriately serve the purposes of the study and that their views represented those of the university community. It was further assumed that the participants were willing to share their views openly, given that the culture of suspicion and lack of transparency was still practiced in certain instances, despite the change in the political environment.
4. The approach taken in this study was assumed to be appropriate and that it would render the study valid. Sufficient data would be collected through the three data collection methods of interview, questionnaire and document review, to ensure adequate treatment of the questions posed in the study.

1.8 Limitations

The study was limited in a number of ways that may affect its findings.

1. The researcher assumed that the respondents were willing to share their views openly and honestly with the researcher. This may not be true, because the stigma of mistrust of each other, which was common during the thirty years of the MCP one-party rule prior to 1994, still haunts some Malawians. Thus, respondents may have either under-represented or over-represented their knowledge of issues.

2. Even though the multi-party era seemed to be stabilizing, several issues need to be normalized. Thus, it could be argued that the democratic principles that were introduced in 1994 are yet to take root in the country. The country is still in transition. The findings and conclusions will only reflect the situation and time at which the data was collected. This is augmented by the fact that some of the people who served in the previous MCP government may still be occupying similar (senior) positions in the current government and as a consequence were part of the study.

3. Data collection was conducted in Malawi, but the actual data analysis took place in Canada, at the University of Saskatchewan. During the data analysis process, it was difficult for the researcher to verify some of the data with respondents in Malawi. However, verification efforts were made in two ways: data collection and partial analysis run concurrently and this allowed immediate verification of some data with the respondents while the researcher was still in Malawi; and second, wherever possible, the electronic mail was used between the researcher in Canada and some of the participants in Malawi during the writing stage.

4. The researcher is an employee of the University of Malawi, with so many colleagues in various positions in the UNIMA structure. The use of sampling methods for data collection may have been biased. However, objectivity in data collection was exercised as it was based on the position a respondent occupied and not on a particular individual.

5. The research was conducted in Malawi when all the constituent colleges were on holidays and the researcher did not have the opportunity to observe meetings in progress in the University. *Observation* would have been an additional method for data collection.

1.9 Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to governance and institutional autonomy in the University of Malawi.

2. In addition to the two public universities, the University of Malawi (established in 1965) and Mzuzu University (established in 1997), there are a number of private universities, which are mushrooming in Malawi. The study concentrated mainly only on the University of Malawi with its five constituent colleges. The University of Mzuzu was a participant in the externals category, while the newly established private universities were not included in the study.

3. Respondents in the study were restricted to government officials directly involved with the administration of the university, members of the University Council, and university administrators at University Office and college levels from whom perceptions regarding university autonomy were derived. The perceptions of the individual lecturers and the general public did not form part of this study.

4. The data collection took place in Malawi during the months of May to November 2005.

1.10 Researcher Context

It is generally accepted that the researcher's personal values and philosophy influence the questions asked and the way research is conducted. Messick (1989) suggested that "[N]either observations nor meanings are theory independent, being influenced byworldview; methodology....is not theory-neutral" (p. 24). Because the researcher is the main instrument in qualitative study (through interviews-interaction with participants, observation, and interpretation of participants' descriptions), it is critical that he/she should be conscious of his/her values, biases, and experiences and how these may impact the research process (Dimitriadis, 2001). Kaplan (1999) added that "values play a part not only in choosing problems but also in patterns of inquiry into them....[bias] is effectively minimized only by making values explicit" (p. 90). According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), researcher biases and experiences should be acknowledged in the finished product so that the reader is aware of where the researcher is coming from and can interpret the research accordingly.

It is clear that the subjectivity of the researcher will impact, to some degree, on all qualitative studies. Who the researcher is will influence what will be studied, how it will be studied, the interactions with participants, and the interpretation of the collected information. Critical self-reflection (reflexivity) in addressing the issue of researcher subjectivity is also valuable. The researcher should describe for the reader who he/she is and what lens is brought to the study. Patton (1990) supported self-reflection and advised that by looking inward, the researcher became aware of his/her personal

viewpoints, biases, and preconceptions regarding the study topic. It is then imperative that the researcher suspends or at least remains aware of them throughout the study. As pointed out by Streubert and Carpenter (1999), by increasing the awareness of his/her preconceptions, the researcher approaches the topic more openly and tries to avoid making judgements based on experience as a faculty member of the university. Van Manen (1997) summarized subjectivity effectively when he stated:

Subjectivity means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning, as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way – while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions. (p. 20)

It is important that the researcher should bear these sentiments in mind for the duration of the study.

1.10.1 About the Researcher

The researcher is currently a faculty member of the University of Malawi, having been in that position since 1977. He completed his undergraduate studies in 1973 at the University of Malawi and specialized in Economics and Mathematics before going to the United Kingdom, where he obtained a Masters degree in Business Administration from the University of Lancaster in 1981. He has been involved in management-related lecturing and consultancies at the University of Malawi since his return from the UK.

At the time of this study, the researcher was an international student at the University of Saskatchewan. His background in academic research was limited, as most of his research was business consultancy-related. He has spent all his working life at the University of Malawi, being part of the academic team that has been with UNIMA both

before and during this transition period since 1994. It is with this background experience that the researcher engaged in this study. Being a member of the UNIMA faculty, it was an advantage to engage in this study since the deeper meanings of certain observable practices were easily discernable. This experience might not have been the case had a researcher new to the UNIMA undertaken the study.

1.11 Definitions of Major Terms

Many of the major terms used in this study will further be expounded in the literature review and in the following chapters. However, definitions of key terms are given below.

1. *Academic community*. According to Dictionary.com (2005) academic community is an

atmosphere of learning and discovery as learning takes place in many contexts. In the case of this study, it referred to all those persons teaching, studying, researching, and working at an institution of higher education (Daniel et al., 1993).

2. *Academic freedom*. Dictionary.com (2005) defined academic freedom as the freedom of teachers, students and academic institutions to pursue knowledge, wherever it may lead, without undue or unreasonable interference. For the purpose of this study, institutional academic freedom was the freedom to decide the content and forms of its education and research; for the academic staff, it was the freedom to chose the subjects, direction and methods of their research and freedom to chose the contents and methods of their teaching as long as this freedom does not contradict legislation and infringe on other persons' rights or the rights of the institution.

3. *Accountability* was defined by Dictionary.com (2005) as the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies, including the administration, governance and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences. In this study, accountability referred to the requirement by government to expect UNIMA to demonstrate responsible actions.

4. *Accreditation*. According to Dictionary.com (2005), accreditation is the process by which a facility's service and operations are examined by a third party (accrediting agency), to determine if applicable standards are met. In this study, it was the process by which an accreditation body, Council for Higher Education, (CHE) would evaluate the quality of a higher education institution as a whole (institutional accreditation) or a specific higher education programme (programme accreditation) in order to formally recognize it as having met a certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards.

5. *Bedspace*. All students who get admitted to UNIMA automatically become eligible for residential accommodation, which is provided by the respective colleges. Thus, the first year students admitted to each college is limited by the available bedspace in the constituent colleges. At the time of the study, only 850 students could be selected annually. This limitation left out many 'qualified' students, who could not be admitted due to lack of bedspace in the colleges.

6. *Capital Hill*. Another name for the location of the government offices in the Malawi's capital city of Lilongwe.

7. *Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda*. Dr Banda was a longtime leader of Malawi, from 1961 to 1994.

8. *Economic fee*. The amount of fees a student of UNIMA should pay in order to cover the expenses of maintaining him/her in a particular college (UNIMA Calendar, 2001-2002).
9. *ExtInterview Y*. This was the response of an interviewee from an external source (outside UNIMA).
10. *Financial contribution*. As a cost-sharing measure, UNIMA required every student to pay a stipulated amount towards the cost of a university education. At the time of the study, each student was required to pay MK25,000 each academic year.
11. *Government control*. Dictionary.com (2005) defined government control as the power of government to direct, manage, oversee and restrict the affairs, business or assets of the university. Usually, the government exercises its authority and control over higher education through two models: the state control and the state supervision (Neave & Van Vught, 1994).
12. *Higher education*. According to Dictionary.com (2005), higher education was defined as education provided by universities, vocational universities and other collegial institutions that awarded degrees. Generally, higher education and training takes place in a university and/or college. In this study, higher education referred to all types of courses of study, or sets of courses of study or training for research at the post secondary level which were recognized by the Government as belonging to higher education system. It was the study beyond secondary school level at an institution that offered programmes terminating in a diploma or degree.
13. *Institutional autonomy* was defined by Dictionary.com (2005) as the freedom to appoint faculty, set standards and admit students. In this study, an autonomous higher

education institutions referred to the right of an institution to decide on its organizational and administrative structure, decide its priorities, manage its budget, hire its personnel and admit its students, decide the content and forms of its education and research.

14. *Interview X*: This was the response of an interviewee from an internal source (within UNIMA).

15. *Mature students*. In this study, mature students were those, who, after having been awarded university diplomas/certificates by UNIMA in relevant fields of study, spent a minimum of two years in industry before returning to UNIMA to pursue advanced qualifications. The idea of accepting mature students achieved UNIMA's objective of providing higher education to as many Malawians as possible, even to those who did not have the opportunity to do so in their tender age.

16. *Malawi Congress Party (MCP)*. This was the first ruling party in Malawi. In July 1958, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned to Malawi (then Nyasaland) after a long absence and assumed leadership of the MCP. In April 1961, MCP won an overwhelming victory in elections for a new legislative Council and in February 1963, the British Government gave the country self-governing status and Dr. Banda became the Prime Minister. Malawi became a fully independent member of the British Commonwealth on July 6, 1964 and two years later, it became a republic with Dr. Banda as its first President and the country was declared a one-party state. In 1970, Dr. Banda was declared President for life of MCP and in 1971, he consolidated his power in the country and was named President for Life of Malawi (Dictionary.com, 2005).

17. *Normal students*. Students who, after doing very well in the Malawi School Certificate of Education or other equivalent qualifications and passing the University Entrance Examinations, are given a government scholarship to study at UNIMA. These students are given food, accommodation, book allowance and tutorials free of charge under the government of Malawi scholarship.

18. *Parallel students*. Students who satisfy UNIMA minimum grade requirements but did not get the opportunity to receive government scholarship. They are allowed into UNIMA academic programmes on condition that they will meet all the financial requirements on their own and attend university on non-residential basis. They are selected from among the students who had the requisite qualifications within the past two years as of the year of selection (University of Malawi Calendar, 2001-2002).

19. *Sub-Sahara Africa*. According to Dictionary.com (2005), this is a term used to describe those countries of the African continent that are not considered part of political North Africa. Geographically, the demarcation line is the southern edge of the Sahara Desert.

20. *United Democratic Front (UDF)*. This was the first political party that was elected into power after the multi-party elections held in May, 1994. Dr. Bakili Muluzi, leader of the UDF, was elected President, defeating the MCP and the long time President, Dr. Kamuzu Banda and other presidential contenders from other parties.

21. *University*. According to Dictionary.com (2005), a University is an institution of higher education and research, which grants degrees like Bachelor's, Master's and doctorates in a variety of subjects. In addition, most professional education is included within higher education, for example disciplines as law and medicine. For this study,

University referred to the University of Malawi (UNIMA), with its five constituent colleges. It offered both taught and/or research-based courses at Bachelor's, Master's and part-time doctorate levels.

22. *University Office*. This is the central administrative office of the University of Malawi, situated in Zomba. The five constituent colleges of UNIMA are administered from this central location.

1.12 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. In Chapter 1, the general background of the study, purpose, the research question, its significance, the assumptions, limitations and definition of major terms were articulated. In Chapter 2, a review of the relevant literature on historical review of higher education, the idea of the university and autonomy in the context of the university, are discussed. In addition, based on the purpose of the study and the review of literature, a conceptual framework to guide this study is described. In Chapter 3, the research design and the methodology of the study are outlined. Ethical issues, data collection and analysis, and validity/trustworthiness of the study are also discussed. The context of the study is described in Chapter 4, and a description of the findings of the entire study and factors arising from the questionnaire results are reported in Chapter 5. Finally, the summary, discussion, conclusion and suggestions for further study based on the findings of the analyses are presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Two sets of literature were relevant to the study of the nature of autonomy in the University of Malawi. The first set was based on the western view of universities and this included a brief history and development of the university and Newman's idea of a university. Also reviewed in this section were the views of the university, the university as an institution, university governance systems, university governance structure and autonomy in the university. The second set of literature review was based on the management of higher education in developing countries, with specific reference to governance systems in African universities. A conceptual framework for the study was presented based on the literature reviewed.

2.2 History of Universities

Greenwood and Levin, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln (2000) explained that universities had monastic origin, and specialized in being centres of higher learning, functions originally given by Church to monasteries. Further, universities were initially Church institutions that provided advanced training to the clergy; later they became both Church-and state-supported institutions for educating doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other circular professionals.

The Columbia Encyclopedia summarizes the history of universities in *three* phases: the early history, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. According

to the Encyclopedia, the *first* phase of the university - the early history - arose in the 12th and 13th centuries as a means of providing further training in the professions of Law, Theology, and Medicine. Of the earliest universities, Salerno (9th century) and Montpellie (13th century) specialized in Medicine; Bologna (1088) in Law; and Paris (12th century) in Theology (p. 619). In the Middle Ages, universities were usually begun “through royal or ecclesiastical initiative or through migrations of students from other universities” (p. 619). The migrations were sometimes influenced by political events. For example, English students who left France due to the conflict between the English and the French in the 12th century founded Oxford University. Similarly German scholars, who were driven out of Prague by John Huss’s Czech national movement, founded the university at Leipzig in the 15th century. In addition, Salamanca in 1230, Prague in 1348, Viena in 1365, Uppsala in 1477 and Moscow in 1755 were among the famous universities founded. (Legasse, 2000, p. 619).

The 19th century was cited in the Columbia Encyclopedia as the *second* phase. During this period, many governments organized and nationalized universities. In the USA, modern universities developed during the late 19th century from the expansion of private colleges and the establishment of state-tax supported universities. At the same time, institutions devoted to graduate study and research, such as the Johns Hopkins University, was founded and each university was devoted to a particular area of study (p. 619).

The *third* phase, according the Columbia Encyclopedia, was the 20th century. During this phase, universities played an increasingly important role in scientific and

technical research, largely as a result of social and government demands for these services. As noted:

The nationalization and bureaucratization of research functions has been especially marked in the USA, where various government agencies dispense large amounts of money to both public and private universities for research purposes. The federal government also provides direct aid to various categories of students, such as veterans and disadvantaged students. (p. 620)

Since World War II, countries experienced a worldwide proliferation of new universities, expansion of old ones, and merging of small institutions into larger university systems. Even in Africa, “as former colonies gained independence during the 1960s and 1970s, each struggled to define its specific educational needs and establish a university system” (p. 620). For example on the African continent, universities were established in Ghana and Nigeria in 1948, in Cote D’Ivoire in 1959 and in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1971. Desire for political equality resulted in further proliferation. In Japan, educational reforms decreed that each of the 47 sections of the country should have at least a university and similar pressures operated in Great Britain, where seven new universities were established in the 1960s alone (p. 620).

2.2 I Summary

In this section, a brief history of universities was discussed. Three eras were identified and the twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of new universities in both the developed and developing countries. In the next section, the literature review concentrated on the western view of the university.

2.3 Newman’s Idea of a University

The 19th century scholar Newman’s (1927/1987) notion of a university was drawn from the ancient designation of a studium generale or “School of Universal

Learning.” Newman described the university as a “school of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter...” and “a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country” (p. 464). Newman’s idea of a university has been at the centre of conceptualization of what universities should be like.

2.3.1 University defined

Newman attempted to define the universal idea of a university by founding a Catholic university in Dublin (Ker, 1999). In a series of public lectures, he defended the founding of the university and the teaching of Catholic theology in the first three lectures and described the normal idea of a university in the remaining seven of the *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education* (1852). According to Ker, the criticism imputed to Newman was that his subject was treated unsystematically, with no underlying theme or unity and that this resulted in some serious misunderstandings of meaning, like:

The Idea of a University seems to neglect, if not deny, the place of research in the university. This is the impression that the casual reader is likely to take away, merely by reading the opening remarks in the Preface, where we are told emphatically that, ‘a University....is a place of teaching universal knowledge’, its ‘object’ being the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement’. After all, Newman notes, ‘If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a university should have students. (Ker, 1976, p. 5 as cited in Ker, 1999, pp. 12-13)

Ker further argued that the issue was not about teaching versus research, but whether Irish bishops really wanted a university at all, or a glorified seminary where Catholic youth could be protected from malign influences of other colleges.

Newman pointed out that “what an empire is in political history, such is a University in the sphere of ...research” (as cited in Ker, 1999, p. 14). In addition, Ker pointed out that Newman’s actual practice at the Catholic University of Ireland supported his commitment to the importance of research when he stated:

He set out plans for research institutes in science, technology, archaeology, and medicine.... His categorical insistence on the research duties of the University’s professors might well have raised eyebrows in the senior common room... Newman certainly dropped a very broad hint about the need for the professors of the Catholic University of Ireland to publish...when he founded a ‘literary and scientific journal’ called the Atlantis, ‘for...depositing professional work’...There is no ground for supposing that Newman only expected the holders of chairs to publish and research, while the rest of the academic staff could devote themselves to teaching. (pp. 14-15)

Newman’s concern was with administration and the quality of teaching and the need for research in a university.

Newman (1927/1987) further expounded the idea and purpose of the university:

It is the place to which a thousand schools make contributions; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal of truth. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. It is the place where the professor becomes eloquent, and is a missionary and a preacher, displaying his science in its most complete and most winning form, pouring it forth with the zeal of enthusiasm, and lighting up his own love of it in the breast of hearers. It is the place where the catechist makes good his ground as he goes, treading in the truth day by day into the ready memory, and wedging and lightening it into the expanding reason. It is a place, which wins admiration of the young by its celebrity, kindles the affections of the

middle-aged by its beauty, and rivets the fidelity of the old by its associations. It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, and Alma Mater of the rising generation. (p. 473)

Newman described the university as “a place of teaching universal knowledge, ...of advancing knowledge through research and diffusing knowledge through publication, as well as relating such advancement, teaching and diffusion to the training of professionals” (as cited in Pelikan, 1992, p. 88).

2.3.2 Liberal Education

Ker (1999) noted that Newman’s primary concern of university education was with ‘mental cultivation’ and that “real cultivation of mind’ had to do with ‘the force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and the versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us” (as cited in Ker, 1999, p. 20). Thus, Newman looked to the university to train the minds of students “to have a connected view or grasp of things.” He defined Liberal Education as “the cultivation of the intellect,and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence” (Ker, p. 21).

Arnold, as cited in Ker, 1999, defined liberal education in terms of culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know...the best which has been thought and said in the world” (p. 22). However, Ker argued that Newman meant something different. “For him intellectual culture did not mean reading great books....but rather learning how to think....one learns to think not by learning a science of thinking but by thinking about the ordinary subjects of knowledge” (p. 22). This is why, Ker continued, Newman said “philosophy presupposes knowledge and requires a

great deal of reading, for knowledge is the indispensable condition of expansion of mind, and the instrument of attaining to it” (p. 22).

Ker (1999) pointed out that knowledge was strictly distinguished from the philosophy, adding that merely to know was not to be educated:

The enlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas hitherto unknown to it, but in the mind’s energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among new ideas, which are rushing in upon it... There is no enlargement, unless there be a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them...It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre, to which both what we know, and what we are learning, the accumulating mass of our requirements, gravitates. (Ker, 1976, pp. 120-121, as cited in Ker, 1999, p. 22)

The need was to educate the mind to be able to synthesize ideas, and in the process contribute to a changed person. The role of a university will thus be reflected in the behaviour of the *educated*.

Ker (1999) argued that Newman knew nothing about the computer and Internet, but knew the potential power of developments in print technology. Ker observed that Newman feared the printing press if it were to act mechanically on the mind, resulting in a passive and almost unconscious enlightenment of the population by the mere multiplication and dissemination of volumes. This would damage the individual element of initiation, which he [Newman] saw as crucial to real education, as one became educated by actively using one’s own mind as opposed to passively absorbing information (p. 23).

It should be noted, however, that Newman did not deplore the information spread by the publication of scientific and literary works and by periodical literature, all of which may have been necessary accomplishment, in the case of educated people.

Such information, according to Newman, remained ‘superficial’ as it did not form or cultivate the intellect – accomplishments are not education, (Ker, 1999, p. 23). Ker further observed that according to Newman,

the well educated or trained mind...has a larger intellectual framework that might be assumed. The ‘cultivation of the intellect’ or the ‘scientific formation of mind’ does certainly involve the ability to ‘grasp things as they are’ and the ‘power of discriminating between truth and falsehood’; but it also includes the capacity ‘of arranging things according to their real value’. It is not only a matter of ‘clear-sightedness’, since the ‘sagacity’ or ‘wisdom’ which the educated person is supposed to possess entails in addition ‘an acquired faculty of judgement’. (as cited in Ker, 1999, p. 24)

Newman was looking for clarity of thought and power of evaluating and of making normative judgements such as ability to distinguish priorities and see what is important and significant from what is not (Ker, 1999, p.24).

Ker (1999) observed that Newman wished education to keep the whole human mind in view, not only one particular part of it; but warned:

Just as some member or organ of the body may be inordinately used and developed, so may memory, or imagination, or the reasoning faculty. And this...is not intellectual culture. But rather, as the body may be tended, cherished, and exercised with a simple view to its general health, so may the intellect also be generally exercised in order to its perfect state [sic]; and this is its cultivation.

Newman stated that it was important to be logical, but imagination and memory for thinking were also needed and without the power to evaluate and judge “it was not possible for the mind to come to decisions, however clear and lucid it may be in its ratiocination” (Ker, 1999, p. 24).

2.3.3 Summary

In this section, Newman's definition of a university as "a place of teaching universal knowledge, advancing knowledge through research, and diffusing knowledge through publication" was presented. Whilst Arnold defined liberal education as "getting to know the best which has been thought and said in the world", Newman argued that it was the cultivation of the intellect which enhanced 'thinking'. Similarly, Ker pointed out that to know was not enough; those who were 'educated' had minds which were able to synthesize/discriminate ideas and decided. In that way, the role of the university was reflected by the behaviour of the 'educated'. In the next section, the views of the university were discussed.

2.4 Views of the University

Greenwood and Levin (as cited in Denzin, 2000) stated that a Prussian, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was the architect and champion of the form of the university most familiar to us today. He articulated the design and logic of the university in an especially clear way. One important principle in Humboldt's restructuring of the university, according to Greenwood & Levin, was the union of research and teaching, in that university faculties and students were to be able to both study and conduct research because university teaching was to be based on research rather than untested doctrines. Humboldt's university curriculum included history, philosophy, classical languages, and political economy, crossing boundaries that were generally not bridgeable in the earlier universities (p. 87).

In von Humboldt's system, freedom of thought and inquiry were the central imperatives in university life. This meant that research was not to be limited by

theological and political constraints. To protect this, the Humboldtian university gave the collegial system the final say about what could be or could not be taught or written. Colleagues, presumed to be well informed and driven by the quest for knowledge (rather than by the Church or political leaders), were empowered to regulate each other's intellectual activities. This kind of university became enormously successful and these institutions quickly became Western society's most advanced knowledge centres. In a short time, the Humboldtian university model took nearly unlimited control over setting the curriculum, conducting research, and teaching society's elites. These social elites then became supporters of the university, and the university-elite relationship became strongly self-reinforcing. The university became a key instrument for the creation of "citizens" to manage and celebrate the nation-state (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p. 87).

Wallace, Schirato and Bright (1999) added:

Universities functioned as 'finishing schools for gentlemen', serving only men from the elite social class and preparing them for leadership roles in a very conservative and structured society. The 'ivory tower' image of universities – which saw universities as being remote from society – was very much in evidence.

Wallace et al. (1999) observed that the current practice had changed from being an elite segment of society to a mass education system. Where once the student body drew from a narrow elite segment of society, universities now serve all of society. Where once universities provided a 'general liberal education' and were involved in training in only the more elite vocations such as medicine and law, universities now prepare graduates for work in a wide variety of vocations from business, teaching, and nursing to tourism/hospitality and journalism.

2.4.1 Views of the University within Society

Watts (1992) proposed that there were three different views of the role of universities within society: the instrumental view, the autonomist view, and the mutually interdependent view. These views will be described briefly.

2.4.1.1 The instrumental view

Watts (1992) suggested that as society was shifting from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy, in which the greatest proportion of new jobs was related to knowledge processing and handling and not to material processing, the productivity and prosperity in society was likely to increasingly depend on “the best use of the brain of technology rather than that of the brawn of industrial workers and industrial machines” (p. 76). Therefore, education and research become the key economic resources in society. “Universities are thus the key instrumentality by which society achieves economic competitiveness and prosperity” (p. 76). Cutt & Dobell (1992) pointed out that “the products of universities – educated and trained people, and information derived from research – will be decisive to the success and civility “ in the society (p. 1). According to Fowler, Boyd & Plank (1993), a better-educated workforce is needed to enhance economic competitiveness (p. 156). Universities are thus challenged to create new generations of workers and managers who understand and use the technologies and this calls on the countries to invest in human capital as a key to economic and productivity growth and international competitiveness.

2.4.1.2 The autonomist view

Watts (1992) pointed out that the autonomist view emphasizes universities as centres of learning and discovery, so that they are concerned primarily with the preservation and creation of knowledge for their own sake and not simply as a means of economic or social development. Beloff argued that “it is only by standing apart from the immediate concerns of society that universities can realize their full potential as centres of learning.... This view emphasizes that universities, as centres of learning and discovery, are concerned primarily with the preservation and creation of knowledge for its own sake and not simply as a means of economic or social development” (pp. 78-79).

Watts (1992) suggested that the advocates of this view also argued that the instrumental view, which saw universities as the servants of immediate social and economic needs, undermined the university’s vital role to act as “both the critical conscience of society and the institution through which the values of society itself are transformed through critical evaluation” (p. 79). This view emphasized that the “function of the university as a whole is not just to enable economic development or social mobility, but rests in the civilizing mandate of transforming society values themselves” (p. 79). Thus, there was real concern for how decisions were made by, for example, students (choice of programmes), or researchers (choice of focus) exerted by the needs and requirements of the economy as perceived by government and corporate sector.

2.4.1.3 The mutually interdependent view

According to Watts (1992), there was “the possibility of reconciling the apparently antithetical elements of the instrumentalist view and the autonomous view”

(p. 79). The role of the university then was to emphasize intrinsic rather than instrumental and was not merely one of serving the needs of society, but the broader one of delivery (pp. 79-80). The university is concerned with questions at the frontiers of human understanding and experience, not just the immediate needs of society.

Since there seems to be a natural congruence between the goals of universities and the effort of society to achieve those goals, Watts (1992) recommended that the intrinsic role and value of the university as an institution could not live apart from society. He suggested:

knowledge has always been important for society, and therefore universities have to recognize the contribution that they make to society. Furthermore, universities in turn cannot fulfil their own intrinsic function of discovery and pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge without the resources and culture of society to nourish them. (p. 80)

Therefore, neither university nor society can be isolated from or independent of each other. “To see universities merely as instruments of public policy is to underrate them; to see them as institutions isolated from society is equally to underrate them” (p. 80).

2.4.2 Summary

In this section, the views of the university were outlined. According to Greenwood and Lewin, von Humboldt restructured perspectives on the university and brought together research and teaching, encouraged freedom of thought and inquiry and the curriculum was decided by a collegial system. von Humboldt’s model was copied by the Western society in the form of knowledge centres, which set curriculum, conducted research, and taught society’s elites. More recently, Wallace et al. (1999) observed that the current university systems had shifted from an elite segment of society to a mass education system, preparing graduates for work in a variety of spheres. Watts

proposed three views of the university: instrumental (to achieve economic competitiveness and prosperity), autonomist (universities as centres of learning and discovery, creating knowledge for its own sake) and mutually independent (universities and the society to work together, as the instrumental and autonomist views seem to underrate the universities).

2.5 University as an Institution

Bargh, Bocock, Scott, and Smith (2000) suggested that in the past 100 years, the university has been a knowledge-producing institution in many different forms – credentials, skills and research. On the other hand, society at large can be termed a “knowledge society” as it is permeated by knowledge in the form of advanced research, high technology industry, growth of mass higher education, and computers (p. 2). Gibbons, (as cited in Bargh et al., 2000), observed that “the autonomous and discipline-denominated science of the 20th century is being part-superseded by more open and contextualized forms of knowledge production” (p. 2).

Ker (1999), argued that Newman’s ideal or vision of a holistic education of the student’s mind must always remain at the heart of a university’s aim and goals, otherwise “today’s university may be no more than a research institution or a college for technical vocational training” (p. 25). The plea was for the university to be a place for liberal education and the teaching of ‘universal knowledge.’

Cabal (1993) stated that higher education became an extremely important element in the organization of modern society in the 1980s. As a result, both industrialized and developing worlds became aware of the vital role played by higher

education. *Relevance* and *quality* were the two most important trends and prospects in higher education. According to Cabal, these trends involved the following:

- *Relevance* – including the role of higher education with societies, democratization, the need for diversification, links with the world of work, and the responsibilities of higher education in relation to the whole system of education; and
- *Quality* – including reforms and innovations, distance education, interdisciplinarity and continuing education, planning and management of resources, organization of programmes, and qualifications of teachers. (p. xi)

Relevance and quality were thought to ensure the continuity of the programmes as the society at large likely be satisfied with the output of the university products. The main challenge facing higher education, argued Cabal (1993), was to democratize access and maintain a high level of quality in the services provided to society. Cabal urged developing countries to invest in higher education because without a good system of higher education, it would be difficult for them to overcome the barriers to improving quality of life and they will likely become forever dependent on industrialized world. Cabal further pointed out that with the end of the cold war, the main problem in the world was underdevelopment and observed: “we cannot expect to solve this massive problem without development policies in which the strengthening of universities for training and research is central” (p. xv). It is, therefore, vital that society appreciates the role the university can play in national development. The university as an institution today will be discussed from two perspectives: the nature and function of the university and the nature of university culture.

2.5.1 Nature and functions of the University

Mayor (as cited in Cabal, 1993) noted that one of the purposes of a university was “to disseminate and popularize knowledge” (p. xxi). Another scholar, Alexander of Manchester, described a university as:

An association or corporation of scholars and teachers engaged in acquiring, communicating, or advancing knowledge, pursuing in a liberal spirit the various sciences which are a preparation for the profession or higher occupations of life.

The omission of any part of this description would convey a false impression of what a university is. (as cited in Hetherington, 1965, p. 5)

Karmel (1990) observed that the purpose for which universities were founded and for which society continued to maintain them included the preservation, transmission and extension of knowledge, the training of highly skilled manpower, and the critical evaluation of the society in which the society lived. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1982), described the university as “a unique institution, a repository of our cultural heritage and a source of the nation’s future intellectual and economic growth” (p. 4).

Hetherington (1965) summarized the central themes and common elements of the university as follows:

- The university is a community of scholars and students, of seniors and juniors;
- It is concerned with knowledge, particularly with the branches of knowledge required for the full exercise of a variety of higher professional callings – this variety being an important consideration, since the university is a meeting place of different disciplines.
- It both communicates and advances these disciplines, its objective being the discovery and better understanding of truth.
- Its work, therefore, cannot be narrowly utilitarian and sectional in outlook. It is infused with a liberality of spirit, calculated to encourage scholars by mutual enlightenment and criticism to look to the unity of knowledge, to be aware of its place in the totality of the values of human experience and thereby to contribute to the ‘education of the whole man’ and to the maintenance and enrichment of the culture within which the university exists. (p. 5)

Though dated, these elements still hold for the ideal university in modern times.

The fundamental roles of a university, as outlined by several scholars, include preservation of classical culture, transmission and extension of knowledge, provision of moral training, updating of knowledge, and preparation of younger generations for

positions of clerical and lay leadership (Cabal, 1993; Karmel, 1990; Clarke, Hough & Stewart, 1984; Birnbaum, 1982). Mayor (as cited in Cabal, 1993) observed that:

A university is for the training at a high level of citizens capable of acting efficiently and effectively in their various functions and activities, including the most diverse, up-to-date, and specialized; for the lifelong and intensive education for all citizens who so wish; for the updating of knowledge; for preparing teacher trainers; for identifying and addressing great national issues;... for cooperating with industry and the services sectors in the progress of the nation...A university is to create, to promote scientific research, innovation, invention. A monitoring university can foresee events. A university is for objective criticism, the search for new paths to a brighter future. (pp. xxi-xxii)

Li (1998) also noted that the universities “have been viewed by various authorities as an organized, self-governing community of scholars, established to preserve, transmit and extend knowledge” (p. 54). Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) (1992) suggested that “through their tripartite functions – teaching (knowledge transfer), research (knowledge discovery), and public service (knowledge application) – higher education institutions have educated the workforce, developed much of the nation’s technology innovation, and provided leadership on important policy decisions” (p. xi).

Cabal (1993) listed the functions of the university as research, teaching, and services. These functions are briefly discussed.

2.5.1.1 Teaching

Yin (1998) pointed out that “the university is the centre of learning and training, in which the total volume of knowledge accumulated in the past is preserved and transmitted” (p. 55). Pullias & Wilburn (1984) stated:

Since its beginnings, the university has been a place of teaching universal knowledge.... The university is where the best of knowledge, skill, and wisdom that our species has so far transmitted to the mature youngsters in a spirit of

imaginative inquiry and where students are trained and where students are trained and prepared to assume their duties and responsibilities of adult life. (p. 68)

Cabal (1993) observed that at its most fundamental level, teaching was making informed recommendations about knowledge as ‘truth’; and because of its relationship to research, the spirit of inquiry brought to all teaching situations distinguished the character of university teaching.

According to Cabal (1993), the teaching function of the university is “inseparable from educational and developmental task of anyone wanting to reach their goals. The university gives the highest level of education, as it is the last stage or component in the formal educational system” (p. 102). Cabal further argued that the educational mission of the university went beyond the visible curriculum (taught at prescribed times and in prescribed schedules). “There is another curriculum that could be called ‘hidden’ underlying the university’s educational commitment. It assumes the undefinable and imprecise task of providing profound and full learning” (p.104).

2.5.1.2 Research

Defining research as the creation of, and the search for, new knowledge, Cabal (1993) proposed that research in universities was administered for various purposes, including scientific development and the politics of research and science; research areas and the selection and maintenance of lines of research in the university; technological research; and student’s development as a creative researcher. These purposes promoted research in the fundamental aspects of the various sciences, so “research has come to be seen as a very prestigious and valuable activities of a university” (p. 94).

In a conceptualization developed by the University of Missouri - St. Louis (2002), it was observed that within a university, the research function had historically been defined as unbounded inquiry into what constitutes ‘truth’ and as such, it was inextricably tied to both the teaching and service functions, distinguishing the character of a university from those of other higher education institutions.

Smith (as cited in Cabal. 1993) emphasized the relation between research and teaching in a report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education:

Universities are believed to be institutions of teaching and learning wherein research is performed and wherein the teaching is done by persons engaged in continuing scholarly activities. This arrangement persists because it is felt that teachers and students both be in a learning mode with an enthusiastic desire to expand their understanding. (p. 123)

Linking research and teaching has the benefit of producing internal effects in the minds of the researchers who also teach, which in turn, affects their students, if they are inspired to discover more than what they are simply required to learn through obligatory assignments (Cabal, 1993).

2.5.1.3 Public Service

According to the University of Missouri – St. Louis (2002), the character of the service function of a university is distinguished by its continuous dialectic with both the research and teaching functions for the purpose of helping both the university community and the broader society achieve their purposes. The responsibilities which societies require the universities to meet have always been heavy. Mori (2000) noted:

They range from the preservation, handing on and development of knowledge, the imparting of that sense of self and of community which later allow the individual to take his – or her – place in the affairs of the nation... to the usual requirements from government that universities show themselves to be efficient with the public monies voted for them... From students and parents comes the

natural hope that the skills the university fosters will be to their advantage later. Employers are no less demanding, and from the community itself come demands that the university help to anticipate and to foresee change. (pp. xiii-xiv)

These tasks have never been light, and the more society expects from the institutions of higher learning, the more the responsibilities expand in complexity and in consequence. The university is today expected to play a bigger role in shaping the nation's economic, social, and political development both locally and globally (Mori, 2000, p. xiv).

Berdahl (1990) pointed out that it was the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 in the United States, which extended the curriculum to include the agriculture, engineering, and mechanical, that ultimately brought forth the notion of university public service (p. 171). Keohane (1999) added:

This gave a new dimension to the purposes of education in the USA, and proved very influential in the development of public attitudes toward higher education. There was a growing sense that universities ought to serve useful purposes beyond the training of leaders in very pragmatic ways rather than being isolated 'ivory towers. (pp. 53-54)

The modern university has the responsibility to use its knowledge for the benefit of the whole society and in addition, "the university has always provided a service to society by its production of scholars, teachers, and presumably a more educated citizenry" (Perkins, 1973, p. 10).

UNESCO (cited in Cabal, 1993) classified the three functions - teaching, research and public service into two categories: *educational* and *social* functions, pointing out that teaching and research were "intellectual functions of the university and were related to the educational function, consisting of the cultivation of the mind and the transmission of basic ideas and concepts" (p. 22). The public service was the social function, "which provided the link between the intellectual and the educational role of

universities on one hand and the development of society on the other” (p. 22). Ostar (cited in Cabal, 1993) emphasized that the carrying of these functions “ought to be interactive within the university and with society” (p. 22).

2.5.2 Nature of University Culture

According to Wallace et al., (1999), the traditional values upon which universities were based include: an interest in knowledge for its own sake, critical thinking, exhaustive inquiry, specialized knowledge, disputation, openness, tolerance, reflection, honesty, respect for intellectual property, collegiality, critique, and academic freedom.

For clarity, Wallace et al. provided the following comments on each of the values:

- *An interest in knowledge for its own sake.* Universities seek knowledge on issues regardless of whether that knowledge has any practical application or use. This gave birth to pure research disciplines (computer science, biotechnology and nuclear physics) for which practical applications were not obvious when that research was commenced.
- *Critical thinking.* Academic work builds on existing knowledge through observation, testing, and the development of rational arguments. Evidence and supporting arguments must always feature strongly in academic work. Universities seek to instill critical thinking in their graduates to help them learn how to improve the way that they think. Critical thinking can involve reasoning, analysis, problem solving, evaluation, and creative thinking.

- *Exhaustive inquiry.* Academic work is typically thorough, involving exhaustive analysis of the subject under study. Scholars will not restrict themselves to that which is considered economically or practically important – they want to know everything, and in considerable detail. This forms the basis for society having available to it a deep and profound knowledge-base that can be drawn upon when required.
- *Specialized knowledge.* Modern scholars typically specialize in a particular area of knowledge – which can sometimes be particularly narrow indeed – for example autonomy in a given university. Scholars are often described as *people who know a lot about a little*. This depth of knowledge is necessary to position scholars to add new knowledge to their own area of expertise and forms the basis for humanity moving ever forward in its understanding of things.
- *Disputation.* Putting forward different opinions or theories (supported with good arguments or evidence) to explain things and then seeing which holds up best advances academic disciplines. The constant introduction, amendment, and mix of theories improve overall understanding of things.
- *Openness.* Free flow of ideas and continuous debate are essential in universities. There must be opportunities for existing ideas to be constructively challenged and for different points of view to be put forward without malicious intentions.
- *Skepticism.* Academicians are always questioning, as they are hungry for ideas. They seek for better ways of thinking about things. This willingness to doubt accepted ways of thinking and to think about and evaluate new ideas is a cornerstone of the academic process.

- *Tolerance.* Universities must remain tolerant of different ideas, viewpoints and cultures.
- *Reflection.* Academicians are as of their own ideas as they are about the ideas of others. Compelling evidence must support statements by academicians otherwise it is “preferable to live with uncertainty – to admit that they ‘just do not know’”. The aim of academic writing is to seek the truth through logical and ordered processes.
- *Honesty.* Evidence must be assessed on its merits; it must never be faked or distorted to suit a particular point of view. It must be interpreted objectively and without bias. Credit must be given to people whose work or ideas are used.
- *Respect for intellectual property.* Other scholars’ ideas must be acknowledged.
- *Collegiality.* This describes the arrangement whereby staff and students (who form the core of any university), treat each other with fairness and respect as a professional collective. A productive and creative academic environment is created by the dialogue and debate between staff and students.
- *Critique.* Societies can improve and develop through scholars critiquing their society by drawing attention to ideas and practices that are unproductive, unjust, illegitimate, and harmful.
- *Academic freedom.* Academicians should be free to pursue scholarly activities and come up with new ideas and challenge conventional wisdom without fear of persecution, imprisonment or any reprisal (Wallace et.al., 1999, pp. 15-21).

- Despite the challenges to some of these traditional values, most universities have endeavored to adhere to these values in order to maintain the reputation of the *university* over the ages.

2.5.3 Summary

A university has been viewed as a place for liberal education and teaching universal knowledge, which permeates the society. Relevance and quality are important and among the expected accomplishments are: the preservation of classical culture, transmission and extension of knowledge, and preparation of younger generation for positions of leadership. The next section examines university governance models, which are inherently important in the discussion of institutional autonomy.

2.6 University Governance Models

Analysis of governance systems in higher education has long been on the agenda of higher education studies. In an effort to address the organization and management of universities within society, several scholars propounded theories for governance of universities. This section discusses briefly the works of Clark (1983), van Vught (1989), Neave and van Vught (1991) and Watts (1992).

2.6.1 Clark's (1983) Triangle of Coordination

Among the first attempts made to develop useful typologies of governance systems is *Clark's Triangle* which has proved to be very useful for describing changes in the way in which a higher education system is coordinated or steered. According to Clark (1983), advanced industrial countries have developed different forms of 'coordination' of higher education which are located between three axes: *state authority*, *market*, and *academic oligarchy* (See Figure 2.1).

Criteria for classification were based on power relationships between the State and the academic community. According to Neave & van Vught (1994), *state authority* refers to “government regulation: the efforts of government to steer the decisions and actions of societal actors according to the objectives the government has set and by using instruments it has at its disposal” (p. 6). The *market* refers to the absence of institutions that regulate decisions and actions. Braun & Merrien (1999) stated:

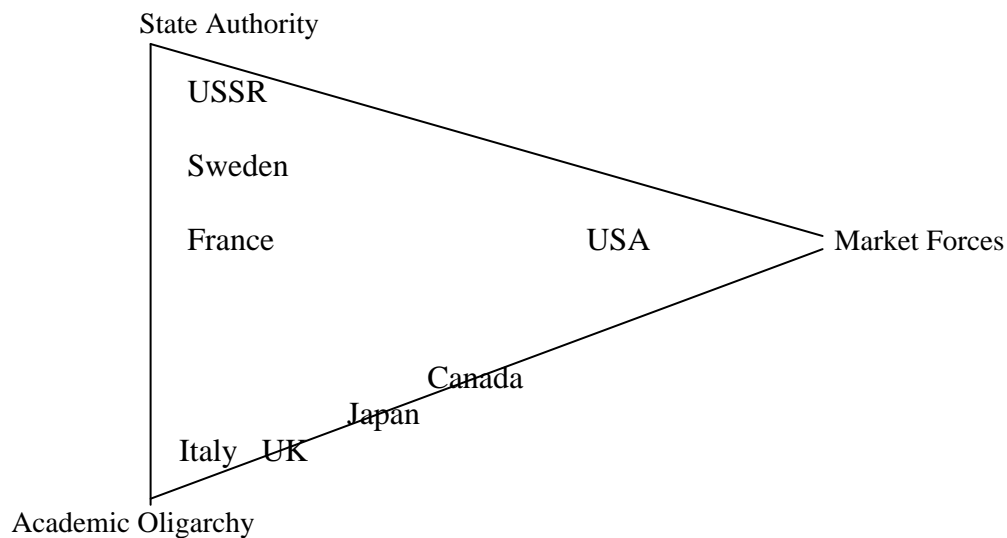


Figure 2.1: Clark’s triangle of Coordination

From: The higher education system: Academic organization in cross-national perspective (p. 143), by B. R. Clark, 1983, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Clark uses the analogy of the *market* to describe the kind of non-deliberate and interest-based co-ordination in countries where the state plays only a minor role and universities have to find multiple resources of financing their budget by competing and bidding (p. 16)

Clark gave the example of the USA, where the co-ordination of universities was seldomly established by decision-making in political or in immediate bodies controlled by the academic community. *Academic oligarchy* refers to the co-ordination capacities of “groups of academic superpersons” who were both in formal settings and informal

networks, and worked together to influence and guide decisions and actions in a higher education system (Clark, 1983, p. 162).

From Figure 2.1 each corner of the triangle represents the extreme of one form and minimum of the other two. For example, the former USSR, Italy and USA were put nearer these three extremes: *state authority*, *academic oligarchy*, and *market* respectively while other countries were in different locations within the triangular framework. Within the triangle, each location represents combinations of these three elements in different degrees. By placing specific higher education systems within the triangle, an indication is given of the overall coordination that takes place in those systems.

2.6.2 Neave and Van Vught's (1989) State Control and State Supervision

Van Vught advocated reducing Clark's three-dimensional space of governance to a two-dimensional one by differentiating between *state control* and *state supervising* models. *The state control model* was a traditional continental European product, in which authority was distributed in a combination of faculty guild and the state bureaucracy (Clark, 1983, p. 125). It was characterized by, on one hand, strong authority of the state bureaucracy, and on the other, the relatively strong position of the academic oligarchy within universities (van Vught, 1994). These higher education systems were created by the state and almost completely financed by it. Furthermore, "the state is very often the overarching and highly powerful regulator of the system" (Neave & van Vught, 1994, p. 9). Van Vught (1999) observed:

The state interfered in order to regulate the access conditions, the curriculum, the degree requirements, the examination systems, the appointment and remuneration of academic staff while the academic community maintains a

considerable authority in the regulation of internal university affairs, especially concerning the contents of education and research. (p. 17)

Thus, States were combining the two dimensions of state and academic oligarchy of Clark's model, instead of separating them.

In concluding the *state control* model, Neave & van Vught (1994) stated:

The state often uses the higher education system for its professional manpower needs. Both the manpower needs of the governmental bureaucracy itself and the assessed needs at the nation's labour market are expected to be fulfilled by the higher education system. The state then finds its legitimization for the detailed control of the higher education in the self-proclaimed task to steer the nation's economy. (p. 10)

Most governments in developing countries have continued to control institutions of higher education hiding behind this claim. On the other hand, certain African countries have experienced national development through such interventions.

Braun and Merrien (1999) claimed that the *state supervising* model was found in countries with an Anglo-Saxon tradition and was characterized by a weaker authority of the state bureaucracy. The authority was divided between a strong academic community and the internal administration of universities. Braun and Merrien argued that "compared to most European universities, there were stronger positions of deans, university presidents, the administration, and even the influence of the Board of Trustees" (p. 17). However, the state influence remained remote.

Van Vught disregarded the category of the market, as universities did not function according to the logic of a market, but rather of the logic of a quasi-market where government always played a certain role. The governance model, according to van Vught, was better described by "a power game between three different levels of actors: state actors at the top level, intermediary organizational actors, and academic

oligarchy at the bottom level, as well as the general philosophy of government intervention” (Braun & Merrien, 1999, p.18). In summarizing the *state supervising* model, Neave and van Vught (1994) stated:

In this model, the influence exercised by the state is weak. The state sees it only as its task to supervise the higher education system, in terms of assuring academic quality and maintaining a certain level of accountability. Government does not intrude into the higher education system by means of detailed regulation and strict control. It rather respects the autonomy of the higher education institutions and it stimulates the self-regulating capabilities of these situations. The state sees itself as a supervisor, steering from a distance and using broad terms of regulation. (p. 11)

The non-interference of the state allowed the university executives to exercise their authority in the area they were best qualified. The issues of academic quality and accountability were vital to any university and being the highest source of funds for the university, the supervisory role in quality and accountability was necessary.

In conclusion, Neave and van Vught (1994) viewed the *state control* model as largely based on the general governmental strategy of rational planning and control and the *state supervising* model as reflecting the governmental strategy of self-regulation (p. 11).

2.6.3 Neave and van Vught (1991) Process and Product Control

In terms of government control over universities, Neave and van Vught distinguished between *process control* and *product control*. Neave and van Vught (1994) defined process control as follow:

Process control concentrates on regulating or shaping the process – curriculum balance, disciplinary profile, and the distribution between disciplines, duration of studies – in short, the conditions, resources and means which form the product – that is, qualified output, the type and level of qualifications in the case of students, projects completed, patents taken out, publications produced in the case of the remaining major dimensions of institutional activity. (p. 251)

Process control focuses on the way universities govern and manage themselves. The control takes into consideration the individuality of each higher education institution as determined by its own set of standards against which the university's performance is evaluated. Process control concerns each university as an individual entity (Loscher, 2004).

The emphasis of product control is on the ultimate product of the university.

Neave and van Vught (1994) described *product control* as follows:

When government regulation takes the form of product control rather than process control, the (procedural) autonomy of the higher education institutions tends to increase. But this increase of procedural autonomy may nevertheless be dependent on a certain minimum performance in the context of product control. When government to a large extent decides what categories of products are to be produced by higher education institutions, their procedural autonomy may be high, but their substantive autonomy may be rather limited. (p. 8)

Control in this domain holds the danger of evaluating the university's performance against the background of an understanding of the purposes of higher education that is applied to the sector as a whole, thereby neglecting the inter-institutional differences in outlook (Loscher, 2004). Product control is being predominantly applied to universities from outside the higher educational sector, product control does therefore not discriminate individual institutions but tends to see the sector as a whole.

2.6.4 Watts' (1992) University Management

Watts (1992) pointed out *four* ways of managing a university:

- through the *power of professional guilds* organized as departments or faculties or academic senates or learned societies as these act through committees, chairmen, deans, rectors, vice-chancellors, or presidents, applying academic norms and values as defined by professors and the former professors who hold higher administrative offices;
- through *political decisions*, through the outcome of the play of power and interest in some political arena – that is, in legislatures, a cabinet committee,...a presidential office;

- through *bureaucratic regulation*, essentially through the management of the higher education system or its institutions by a ministry or the civil service;
- through the *operation of markets* where events are not willed or planned by central agencies or by political decisions, but emerge as the outcome of the myriad decisions of many actors competing for various goods, for money or power, for students or teachers or graduates. These markets themselves are usually constrained and regulated, formally or informally, in part by rules of the large society, in part by the norms of academic life. (p. 81)

Essentially, each national system of higher education usually organizes itself and makes decisions through some combination of all the four modes of governance. But what differs among them is the relative weight and importance of these four different ways of governing higher education. Watts observed that the particular blend and emphasis and weight given to professional guilds, political decisions, bureaucratic regulations or market mechanisms have varied greatly among national systems.

Watts (1992) further illustrated the organization and management of universities using the four modes described in the previous paragraph, citing the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand as countries which had a rapid growth in the role of the state in university finance and organization due to the enormous growth in the costs of higher education. On the other hand, in the continental Europe, the tendency was towards the roles of professional guilds and increasingly of the bureaucracy. In the USA and Japan, the market had played a much stronger role in the governance of universities, in part, through the parallel operation of the private and public institutions and also through the emphasis on tuition fees as an important element in funding universities. There had also been a stronger political rather than bureaucratic element in the management of universities in the USA. In Japan, however, the bureaucratic role had a

stronger element, particularly in relation to the imperial and national universities (pp. 82-83).

2.6.5 Summary

In this section, it was noted that most governments were generous in terms of university funding because of the universities' multiplicity of functions; however, the universities' position was being jeopardized due to loss of its quasi-monopolistic position, earmarked global funding, the need to strengthen the university/industry relations, and interference from policy-makers. This called for new political demands and strategies for governments with respect to university governance.

The two beliefs of governments were *cultural* – where universities were assigned institutional autonomy and no political interference in order to contribute to economic development of societies and *public* – which rejected the cultural view and allowed government supervision and market intervention to administer public services.

Four ways of organizing and managing universities within society: power of professional guilds, political decisions, bureaucratic regulations and operation of markets were discussed, and it was noted that a combination of the four modes was common in most countries.

Lastly, one of the most used typologies of governance - Clark's triangle – with the *three* axes: state authority, market, and academic oligarchy was discussed. van Vught's typology was different from Clark's triangle in that it differentiated between *state control* and *state supervision*. The other models that were discussed include Neave and van Vught *process* and *product control* and Watts' university management – *professional guilds, political decisions, bureaucratic regulation and operation of*

markets. University governance models are a critical element in the discussion of institutional autonomy.

2.7 Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy in the Context of the University

Academic freedom and university autonomy are twin concepts that are among the most important issues concerning the existence, mission, and role of the university throughout the world. Universities have always considered the ideas of the two concepts to be indispensable values and have defended them as such. As Mori (2000) observed:

Academic freedom and university autonomy have, amongst others, been the two prime conditions which, from the earliest times, society has granted the university. Society has granted them to academia in the conviction that academic freedom and university autonomy are the best and most effective ways to ensure the university carries out its responsibilities to society. Academic freedom and university autonomy may, to some, appear as privileges. But they are much more than that. They are the fundamental moral and professional ethic which underpins what once was termed the “search after truth” which today is seen as the “advancement of fundamental knowledge”. It is on the ability to efficiently advance knowledge that the competitiveness of the Nation within a global “knowledge society” is secured and is anchored. (Mori, 2000, p. xv)

Ashby (1966) and Tight (1992) noted that there was a clear difference between institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Institutions of higher learning are normally organized in a particular way in order to attain the goals and objectives it has set for itself. White and Hollingsworth (1999) categorized organizational independence to three groups. *First*, organizational independence was focused on how an institution was organized, financed and its relation to other institutions (*institutional autonomy*). *Second* was the extent to which the individuals who staff the office or body were protected from any external influence and in particular from the clients of the institutions (*academic freedom*). The *third*

group focused on how the body operated or performed its function, whether it could perform its functions without being dependent on any interested party (*operational independence*). Kohtamaki (2003) advised that when looking at autonomy of higher institutions, one had to be aware of whether the focus was on *individual* or on *institutional* issues. The two concepts (academic freedom and institutional autonomy) are discussed in the following section.

2.7.1 The Place of Academic Freedom in Discussion of Institutional Autonomy

Barnet (1990) observed that since the foundation of the university, academic freedom had been and remained the central value and condition which both justified and made possible, innovation and organized creativity. It was the central, persuasive and guiding principle of academic work. As a response to growing concerns about the alarming tendency of some governments to undermine, restrict or suppress academic freedom and the autonomy of institutions of higher education in the name of economic austerity and political expediency, the World University Service (WUS), in 1984, adopted a basic principle that academic freedom was a universal human right, a civil liberty according to which all should be free to seek the truth about anything and to pass it on to others (Daniel, deVlaming, Hartley and Nowak, 1993). This right made it incumbent upon authorities not to penalize, dismiss or harass academics for pursuing the truth or to penalize students involved in the process of critical inquiry; but to supply conditions conducive to full freedom of teaching, research, and study.

Nyborg (2003) stated that academic freedom was an integral part of an autonomous university and argued that “to meet the needs of the world around it, [the

University] research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power” (p. 1). Dlamini (1997) pointed out that academic freedom was as important as any other right since it enabled universities to do their job of generating and disseminating knowledge and information efficiently.

According to Dlamini:

It enables academics to think freely, to speculate and to experiment with new ideas. Important developments have spearheaded by those people who think freely and creatively. Knowledge generated through this creative and critical thinking is important for the development of society. Academic freedom is also important because it allows for the critical scrutiny of all aspects of society, social, economic, and political, and facilitates re-evaluation and renewal. Knowledge is advanced through critical inquiry and not through encouraging orthodoxy or adherence to accepted dogma. (as cited in Harvey, 2004, p. 2)

The knowledge, which is for the benefit of society in general, is aimed at improving the quality of life of all people, physically, economically, politically and even spiritually.

2.7.1.1 Academic freedom defined

Daniel et al. (1993), defined academic freedom as “the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in pursuit, development, and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing” (p.154).

Kamba (2000) observed that “history and experience teach us that knowledge is the engine of human progress and development and that research is the motive power for the creation and extension of knowledge” (p. 192). This statement ties in well with another definition provided by Berdahl (1990): “the freedom of the individual scholar in his/her teaching and research to pursue truth wherever it seems to lead without fear of punishment or termination of employment for having offended some political, religious

or social orthodoxy” (p. 171). “Fundamental to scientific enquiry, to the pursuit of knowledge and break-throughs has been the freedom to think, to question, to criticize, and not to accept knowledge as finite; and this is *academic freedom*” (p. 193).

In pursuit of knowledge, academics may be hindered from following the approach which they think is most fruitful with regard to scientific or scholarly discovery. They must be free to communicate what they consider to be scientifically or intellectually valid insights. The researchers should have the right to choose their research topics and methods, to search for the truth without restriction, and to publish the results independently of the will of public authorities.

Ajayi et al. (1996) observed that with regard to the teaching function, the teachers had to have the right to plan and organize teaching programmes within given frameworks, and to lecture on topics that they considered essential, according to their conscience and conviction. Thus, academic freedom can be summarized as the *academic’s right to freedom of thought and expression*. However, academic freedom is best linked to responsibility. “The individual researcher and teacher is responsible to the academic and scientific community which compares and evaluates methods and results, thus serving as a correcting factor within university life and work” (p. 242).

2.7.1.2 Legislation governing academic freedom

IAU – Working Document (1997) observed that an examination of the constitutions and legislation on higher education showed that academic freedom often enjoyed legal or constitutional protection. Further, there were countries, which entrenched academic freedom in their constitutions. Academic freedom cannot of course exceed the liberties allowed by the law of the land (Ajayi et al., 1996). So a

country which does not permit freedom of speech and publication to its ordinary citizens cannot grant academic freedom to its universities. In such countries, “academic freedom is eclipsed and accordingly universities cannot flourish” (Ajayi et al., p. 246). A university must have a liberal, tolerant climate in which people feel free to express their opinions, argue and disagree, when necessary, without fear of victimization. As Ajayi et al. pointed out:

In many societies, academic freedom has this broad meaning, covering not just the teachers and researchers, but the whole university community, thus making the university a centre of critical, innovative thinking, not only in specific fields and disciplines, but in social, cultural, and political areas as well. (p. 246)

As will be shown later, there are cases, including those on the African continent, when the academia have been victimized for their stance on certain issues. This has a demoralizing effect on the university community.

2.7.1.3. Summary

Academic freedom is central to institutional autonomy. It guarantees the liberty of those engaged in higher learning to teach, research and to express opinions in the areas for which they are qualified and the advancement of which they are professionally committed and to do so without fear of any reprisal.

According to the International Association of Universities (IOU) Working Document (1997), academic freedom is regarded as the exemption in the area of academic endeavour and scholarship from government instructions and intervention. Academic freedom is a fundamental philosophical premise on which the transmission of established knowledge and the generation of new knowledge is grounded. van Ginkel (1995) suggested that academic freedom was the optimal condition for the advancement

of knowledge, for underpinning the pursuit of excellence and the application of human creativity to matters of concern to the various communities, scholarly and economic, industrial and social, which have a stake in higher learning.

Reports in IAU Working Document (1997) pointed out that in an institution of higher education endowed with institutional autonomy, academic freedom was protected by law and guaranteed by individual governments. Nevertheless, it is not a license and there are responsibilities associated with academic freedom.

2.7.2 Institutional Autonomy

The notion of autonomy has been central to the debate on the reform of universities over centuries. Thorens (as cited by Cabal, 1993) put the discussion on institutional autonomy in perspective:

Autonomy is indispensable to the role and work of the university. Today, it is differentiated into organizational autonomy, academic autonomy, and financial autonomy. This autonomy was real and vigorous, according to d'Irsay (1933) in the "ex-consuetudine" universities, but became vulnerable and weak once the "ex-privilegio" universities became subject to the will of their founders. Throughout history, the intervention of political powers, to a greater or lesser extent, has threatened autonomy with different philosophies and different policies for higher education. Universities have also been affected by various financial pressures to the extent that they have asked themselves whether autonomy has been a myth. (p. 23)

External influences (political or financial), on the operating independence of the universities, have affected their autonomy.

Analysis of autonomy is focussed usually on freedom of action. As was shown in the wording of the research questions in Chapter 1, a relevant basis to approach autonomy is a question stated by Etzioni: "To what degree can societal actors decide their course of action, and to what degree are they compelled to follow a course not chosen by them?" (as cited in Kohtamaki, 2003, p. 2). According to Kohtamaki (2003),

the analysis of autonomy is focused usually on freedom of action and also capacity to act and achieve results (power). As observed by Dlamini (1997), a university needed autonomy and a measure of freedom for its academics if it had to play its role of generating and disseminating knowledge effectively.

2.7.2.1 Autonomy defined

Pfeffer and Salancik (as cited in Kohtamaki (2003) saw autonomy as the ability to initiate or terminate actions at one's discretion. Harvey (2004) argued that the core definition of autonomy was being able to undertake activities without seeking permission from a controlling body. Harvey further observed that in higher education, autonomous institutions established their own programmes, controlled their own finances (once received) subject to normal auditing procedures, and also granted their own degrees. Snyder (2002) added:

At first glance, the definition of autonomy seems clear enough. Derived from the Greek words for "self" and "law or customary usage", the word describes the practice of self-government that we consider the right and responsibility of colleges and universities. But the issue is not so simple ... autonomy is always relative. What colleges and universities should seek ... is reasonable, not absolute autonomy. Total autonomy, total independence and separation from society, is simply impossible. The degree of an institution's autonomy varies according to the nature of its relationships. (p. 1)

Similar to the definition by Harvey (2004), Nura (2005) observed that autonomy meant the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anybody else. In this vein, Nura's definition of autonomy of universities was in terms of:

Their freedom to govern themselves, appoint their key officers, determine the conditions of service of their staff; control their student admissions and academic curricula, control their finances and generally regulate themselves as independent legal entities, without undue interference from federal government" (p. 2)

Dlamini (1997) noted:

The definition of autonomy that has become a classic ... and quoted with approval in numerous American cases, is that it entails the freedom of a university to determine for itself on academic grounds only who should teach, what should be taught, how it should be taught, and who should be admitted as students. Although this definition has later been found to be narrow, it still remains a useful guideline in demarcating the limits of legitimate autonomy. The limits of this autonomy are important, because some people have problems as to how an institution that is subsidized by the government can claim to be autonomous from the government. "Is it not true that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'"? They ask. (p. 4)

Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996), while giving similar definition as those quoted above, summarized autonomy as *self-government by a university*. De Groof, Neave, and Svec (1998) agreed with 'self-governance' and suggested:

University enjoys freedom from government regulation in respect of the internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal distribution of financial resources, in the generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study and finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research. (p. 75)

Hetherington (1965) argued that "universities as corporate societies should enjoy and be assured of a high degree of autonomy, that they should be free to take the decisions necessary to their essential business by their own procedures and without constraint by external authority" (p. 1). This observation, made nearly 40 years ago, is still relevant in the study of autonomy in institutions of higher learning today.

As noted in the International Association of Universities (IAU) Working Documents (1997), the understanding of institutional autonomy implied that the university enjoyed freedom from government regulation in respect of internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal management of finances, in

the generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study and finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research. It was that condition which permitted an institution of higher education to govern itself without external interference.

2.7.2.2. Historical aspect of university autonomy

The autonomy of universities was historically interpreted in various ways due to the varying history of higher education systems (Kohtamaki, 2003). Neave (1998) categorized historically models of university autonomy into the *Bologna* model, the *Paris* model, the *Humboldtian* model, and the *British* model. The Bologna model of autonomy consisted of the freedom of the individual to learn. The Paris model viewed autonomy as the freedom to teach and applied mainly to academe. Neave also observed that “the origins of the Bologna and Paris models dated back to the 12th and 11th centuries” (p. 33). Humboldt’s notion of academic freedom was a later model and according to Ashby (1966), academic freedom was an internationally recognized and unambiguous privilege of university teachers (*Lehrfreiheit*), and a privilege of the research worker and the student (*Lernfreiheit*) that was formulated in Germany in the 19th century. As was defined above, academic freedom involved an individual scholar’s freedom to pursue the truth in teaching and research wherever it seemed to lead, without fear of punishment or termination of employment for having offended some political, religious or social orthodoxy (Ashby, 1966). According to Neave “the British model can be described as a property-owning corporation of scholars, where the University Grants Committee was the arena for negotiation between the state and the university, but in which the control belonged to the universities” (p. 37). In Neave’s category, the central

element was to grant freedom to the members of the university without any external interference.

Neave (1998) conducted another classification of the different forms of autonomy into: (a) the *Kantian* model, in which the State interfered only in certain subjects, (b) the *Humboldtian* model, in which the role of the State was a facilitating one, (c) the *Napoleonic* model, which rested on the idea that the university was clearly subordinate to the State, and (d) the *British model*, in which property-owning corporations of scholars were supported by the State, but without any intervention. Under this interpretation, Neave observed that the involvement of the State varied from state control systems to the absence of control altogether, but the focus was to protect individual freedom in exercising the academic profession. Autonomy in the university context was based on their thousands of years of history, and originated from the mission of the whole university institution.

2.7.2.3 Degrees of autonomy

As noted in the International Association of Universities (IAU) Working Document (1997), the present-day understanding of institutional autonomy implies that the university enjoys freedom from government regulation in respect of internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal management of financial resources, in the generation of income from non public resources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study and finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research. As was described earlier, *autonomy is that condition which permits an institution of higher education to govern itself without external interference.*

However, self-government by a university is highly theoretical. As pointed out by Ajayi et al. (1996), in practice, no higher education system is wholly free from external control. Taper and Salter further observed that institutional autonomy was “a boundary condition between university, government and society which is capable of being modified, redefined and having new conditions enforced as a price of its continuation” (as cited in De Groof, et al., 1998, p. 76).

It seems evident therefore that in the context of modern society, no university makes or can make a claim to complete autonomy. In terms of financial autonomy, for example, few universities are well enough endowed to maintain themselves. As Hetherington (1965) pointed out:

In most countries all universities depend to a greater or less degree on continuing support from public funds administered through a department of government. [This support cannot come] without some governmental study of the use to which the university put the funds committed to them. Hence over a very large area of the world, the question about autonomy is really a question about the relation of universities and State. (p. 2)

Hetherington (1965) further added that any other contributor to a university's income may try to influence it, be it local municipalities, alumni, business corporations, or churches whose contributions are an important element in the university budget. In short, wherever there is financial dependence, the issue of autonomy may arise.

Moore (1993) also contributed to the debate:

No country in the world has a government which does not retain some control over its universities. In continental Europe in particular, the various governments are responsible for the total of higher education effort in their countries, including the ways in which universities serve society, not simply for the provision of resources. Universities are public services. The question, therefore, is not whether or not governments should have some control over universities, but rather, how much control and where it should be exercised. (p. 61)

The extent of government's control of universities is likely to vary from one country to another and finding out the extent of such control in a specific country can be of interest.

Magrath observed:

Autonomy is always relative. What colleges and universities should seek ... is reasonable, not absolute autonomy. Total autonomy, total independence and separation from society, is simply impossible. The degree of an institution's autonomy varies according to the nature of its relationships. (as cited in Snyder, 2002, p. 2)

2.7.2.4 Ingredients of autonomy

There is a wide measure of agreement about the ingredients that matter most with respect to institutional autonomy. According to Ajayi et al. (1996), the ingredients include ability to:

- freely select its students and its staff and to determine the conditions under which they remain in the university;
- set its own standards and decide to whom to award its degrees, even if universities voluntarily set limits to their own freedom by appointment of external examiners;
- design its own curriculum, although it may in practice have to do within certain constraints;
- make the final decisions as to the research programmes carried on within its walls;
- freely decide how to allocate its income from state and private sources among the different categories of expenditure. (p. 224)

Ashby (1966) provided a further condition of autonomy without which these ingredients would be ineffective. This was where the governing Council had a majority of non-academics participating in governing of the university. Ashby stressed the importance of the non-academics identifying themselves with the university, and not to consider themselves only as representatives of interests external to the university. He further

pointed out the need for the academic decisions to be delegated to the academics themselves, arguing that this internal coherence and balance of power was essential to safeguard the betrayal of autonomy from within.

2.7.2.5 Short-term and long-term views of autonomy

Traditional thinking about universities has stressed their basic mission (or long term-term responsibility) to preserve the culture and heritage of society, generate new knowledge, and transmit that knowledge to future generations. Snyder (2002) commented:

Society has created and supported these institutions in the belief that, by preserving, discovering, and transmitting knowledge, they serve the common good and advance the status of humanity. Historically, society has recognized the university's need for autonomy to achieve its goals, but it has also, at least implicitly until now, imposed certain expectations: effective (if not always efficient) self-government, professional integrity and standards, and intellectual objectivity. (p. 2)

This view, according to Weber (as cited in Snyder, 2002), was the long-term view of the university's mission and society's needs.

Snyder (2002) further argued that universities served their societies in other, more immediate ways as well. This view, according to Weber (as cited in Snyder, 2002), was the short-term view of the university's mission and society's needs. Snyder further observed:

The number of colleges and universities has steadily increased, their size has greatly expanded, the knowledge level to be studied and distributed has risen exponentially, and the population served has grown from the privileged few to a mass audience. Higher education is almost universally viewed as the route to individual and social success. Today, colleges and universities would not fail to acknowledge the vital role they play in all forms of development. (p. 2)

Institutions of higher learning may be relatively free to decide *how* in such matters as curriculum, pedagogy, and delivery systems but may not have much choice in responding to social engagement, as the pressure and inducement to respond are enormous. According to Snyder, for most institutions failure to respond would contravene their mission to prepare students for life after graduation; it therefore seemed that some measure of autonomy was sacrificed as social engagement increased.

Some have argued that since the universities are considered autonomous by both legislators and keepers of academic traditions, government must have no involvement of any kind in establishing and implementing university priorities. However, according to MacKay (1996), this view disregards the history of universities' relative autonomy, first in medieval Europe and then gradually in very different societies across the modern world. "Universities, like governments, may have begun as private organizations of narrow interest, but they became rapidly and irreversibly identified with the public interest and many of them continue to bear the name of the public they most immediately serve" (p. 2).

2.7.2.6 Autonomy differentiated

As noted in the IAU Working Documents (1997), different aspects of autonomy can be distinguished. Berdahl (1990) distinguished between *substantive* and *procedural* autonomy. Berdahl defined *substantive* autonomy as "the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its goals and programmes – in other words, the *what* of academe" (p. 172); and IAU Working Document defined it as "the right of a university to determine its own study programmes and their goals" (p. 4). This could be termed the *institutional* autonomy. *Procedural* autonomy was defined by Berdahl as

“the power of the university or corporate form to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued – the *how* of academe” (p. 172); and in the IAU – Working Document, it was defined as “the right of a university to determine the means it shall devote to fulfill priorities agreed upon beforehand and assigned to it as part of national policy” (p. 4). Both *the how* and *the what* of academe are important in explaining the operation of a university. Berdahl viewed the two terms, academic freedom and university autonomy (substantive and procedural) as interrelated. Berdahl argued:

A university enjoying a greater autonomy would normally be more able to protect the academic freedom of its faculty; or a government could impose such a heavy set of procedural controls that they would have serious impact on a university’s ability to achieve its self-chosen substantive goals. Thus, in exploring autonomy issues, it is helpful to know whether the government is intervening in procedural or substantive matters....In contrast, government actions that affect substantive goals affect the heart of academe. What is needed in this sensitive area then is negotiation of the respective roles of government and universities, leading to some form of partnership and a division of powers concerning who will make which kinds of decisions relating to the substance of academe. (p. 172)

Loscher (2004) developed a model to put into perspective the categories of autonomy as discussed above, and supplemented the model with a catalogue of criteria against which to assess the degree of a university’s autonomy. Figure 2.2 shows the schema of autonomy.

From the figure, the broad concept of *university autonomy* is broken down into *procedural* autonomy – the power of a higher educational institution to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued – the *how of academe* (Berdahl, 1990) and *substantive* autonomy – the power of higher educational institution to determine its own goals and programmes – the *what of academe* (Berdahl, 1990).

Within the procedural autonomy, organic and administrative autonomy are further categories which describe a university's liberty to establish internal forms of academic organization and to determine/control priorities, personal policy, administrative processes as well as budgetary issues respectively. *Organic* autonomy conferred upon the university the capacity to determine its own internal forms of academic organization. *Administrative* autonomy, on the other hand, was the freedom to choose priorities, to decide on duties

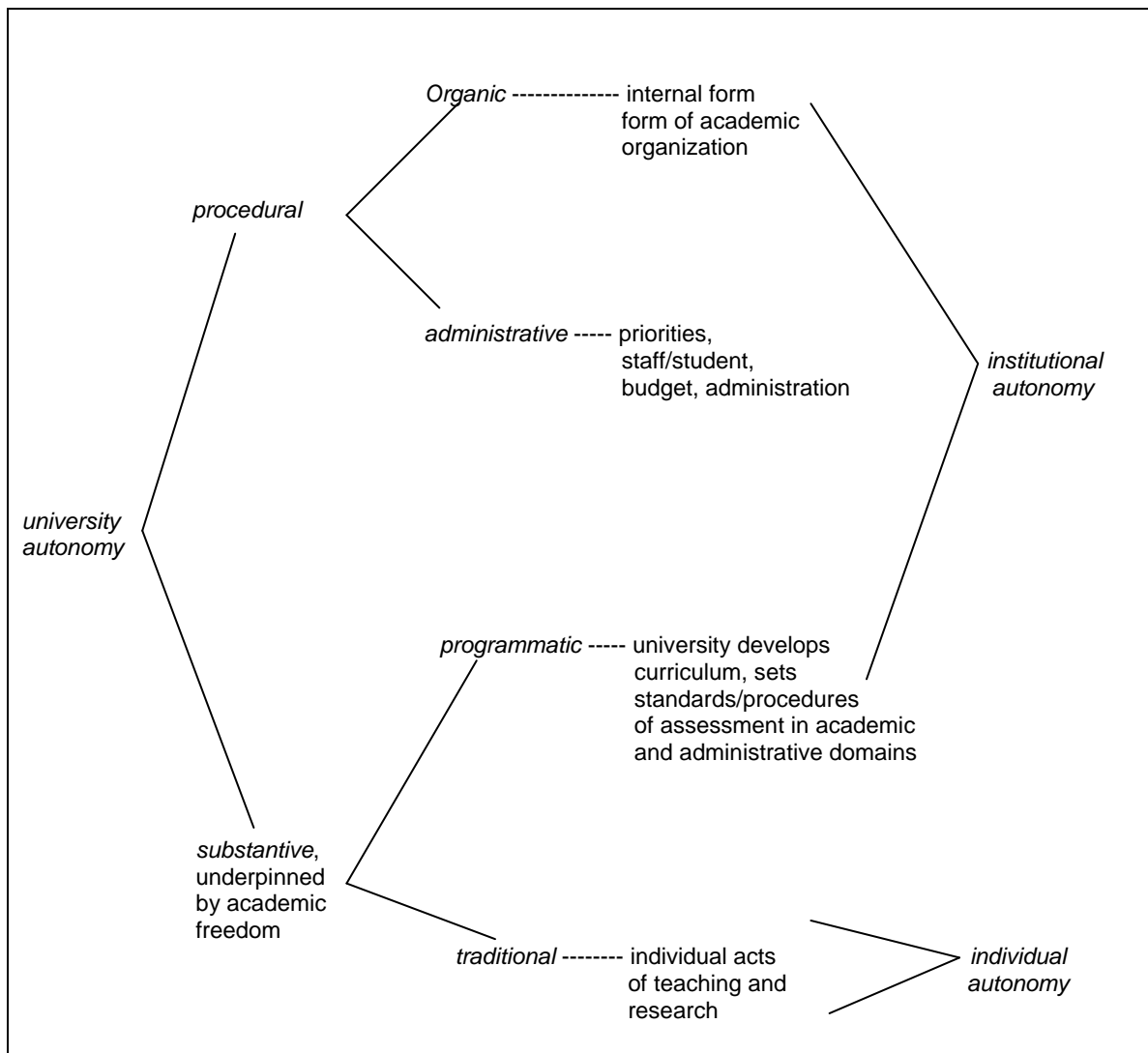


Figure 2.2: Schema of Autonomy (Loscher, 2004)

and opportunities. It also embraces the power to set complementary detailed procedures for institutional administration, budgetary control and personnel policy (IAU Working Documents, 1997).

Underpinned by the principle of university autonomy, substantive autonomy could be subdivided into aspects of concern for a university as a whole and those related to the individual academics. According to Loscher (2004):

Programmatic autonomy donates a university's freedom to develop and establish its curriculum as well as standards and procedures of assessment of both the academic and administrative domain. *Traditional* autonomy refers to the acts of teaching and research. It is therefore understood as the academics' individual autonomy, while *organic*, *administrative* and *programmatic* autonomy together constitute *institutional* autonomy. (pp. 22-23)

Institutional autonomy gives a university freedom to generate and distribute internally funds derived from public and non-public sources; determine the criteria for admission of academic staff and students; set standards of achievement and establish procedures of assessment; and develop a strategy and establish the structures necessary to achieve its aims. *Individual* autonomy, on the other hand, is subordinate to institutional autonomy, and aims at achieving the university's intellectual and economic goals as set out by the institution's plan. The degree of both institutional and individual autonomy is determined by the capability to accountability through audit. (Loscher, 2004).

2.7.2.8 Autonomy and accountability

Autonomy is closely connected with accountability. Neave (2000) pointed out that "accountability has often been compared with the obligation of a firm to report to its shareholders, to keep them abreast of its fortunes and appraised of how the enterprise

has fared in attaining its objectives” (p. 20). Similarly, higher education institutions must be accountable to their sponsors, whether public or private. The university must demonstrate the relevance of its role to the needs of society, and it must allow the effectiveness with which it performs that role to be subject to review.

According to Mackay (1996), *accountability* is defined in a broad sense as a means or set of mechanisms designed to manage the evolving relationships between and among the various entities with legitimate interests in the post-secondary sector, including the institutions of higher education and government. Andren and Johansson-Dahre, as cited in Ajayi et al., (1996) observed:

The proportion of national income that goes into university budgets is such that governments need to make universities accountable. The fund providers (government or private source) want to know how the money is spent, what the results of teaching are, that is, whether or not they can be put to good use by society and whether or not their quality stands up to international comparison. (p. 170)

Government provides funding to universities from a limited purse and cannot afford to allow the universities a free hand in the expenditure of funds. Failure to demand accountability might result in mismanagement of resources (financial and/or otherwise), as has been the case in a number of African universities.

Mackay (1996) argued that while the government should be held accountable for setting out the public priorities and funding programmes for the universities, accountability of the universities can take a number of forms:

- *financial accountability* – to ensure that the moneys are spent wisely and in conformity with the law and convention;
- *programme accountability* – to ensure that a university’s programmes and services are relevant and responsive to current provincial and national needs and student demands, and achieve the desired results;
- *governance accountability* – to ensure that each university’s organizational and decision-making structures are effective and responsible;

- *system accountability* – to ensure that, between them the universities offer a coherent and comprehensive array of programmes and services, and that the university sector functions well as part of the whole post-secondary system. (p. 21)

Mackay stated that since the universities were created by the legislature, and that government was the primary source of revenues for the universities, it [government] had a responsibility to make sure that the universities had a meaningful, complementary mandate; that they spent public funding to good effect; that universities' governance structures were active and responsive; and that the universities formed part of a broad, comprehensive system of post-secondary education and training. This responsibility, Mackay observed, did not imply any right or desire of the government to be involved in the day-to-day operations of the universities but, rather, suggest legitimate government involvement in determining general directions and priorities as the university evolved.

Thus a university may be both autonomous and accountable. In practice, one senses that the more accountability is required, the less autonomy exists. The ideal aim seems to be a balance of both conditions. As argued in the Higher Education in Developing Countries (HEDC) Report (2002):

Accountability does not imply uncontrolled interference, but it does impose a requirement to periodically explain actions and have successes and failures examined in a transparent fashion. All transactions should occur within the context of agreed rights and responsibilities. Buffer mechanisms may be needed to help determine the appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability. (p. 3)

Too much autonomy may lead to unresponsiveness to society on the part of universities; while too much demand for accountability may destroy the necessary academic and institutional systems. Nevertheless, it is inconceivable that any university today will refuse to account to the government for the use of public funds. Such a university would

be “challenging its solidarity with society and with the government as a representative of the State”(Ajayi, et al., 1996, p. 247).

Similarly, Berdahl’s (1990) conception of autonomy made a distinction between autonomy and accountability and defined *autonomy* as the “power to govern without outside controls” and *accountability* as “the requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to some external constituen(y)ies” (p. 171). According to Berdahl, being both highly autonomous and rigorously accountable is theoretically compatible, but in practice, more accountability results in less autonomy. The ideal is balance of both conditions.

2.8 The Development and Experience of the Universities in Africa

Most African universities were established in the 1960’s and early 1970’s shortly after attaining independence. Seddoh (2003) stated that even though higher education in Africa is poorly developed and facing serious problems, universities are still generators of development and modernization.

2.8.1 Historical Background of Universities

University expansion in Africa dates back for only a few years compared to the western universities. Taiwo (as cited in Cabal, 1993) noted that the whole of *anglophone* West Africa had only seven universities by mid-1962 and *francophone* West Africa had only two universities. Auala (as cited in Cabal, 1993) reported that historically, most African countries strove to establish at least one national university immediately after independence. Siwela (1999) observed that most African universities were established in the 1960’s and early 1970’s shortly after independence in order to

train indigenous personnel to replace colonial administrators in the civil service and parastatals.

Ishumi (1990) commented on the reasons that the different countries had for creating universities in the postcolonial years:

Producing well-educated and functionally competent middle and high-level manpower to manage the various sectors of the national economy; creating and imprinting a positive international image for the newly independent state by construction of respectable institutions and expansion of existing ones for an increased pupil and student enrollment; reducing and ultimately eradicating mass illiteracy; and creating within the national community a literate, innovative and creatively self-reliant cadre whose productivity and skills would form an asset in the production and accumulation of national wealth in the years after formal schooling. (as cited in Cabal, 1993, pp. 11-12)

According to Ishumi, the establishment of universities in each country was contrary to the regional approach and regional orientation in higher education of the colonial times. Ishumi pointed out that Makerere University College in Uganda, was a regional federal institution designed to cater to East African needs (Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar). Similarly, the university set up in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in Central Africa was intended to serve Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi); and the same applied to University of Botswana, which was originally designed to cater for the three countries of southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (Cabal, 1993).

The colonial heritage and the resultant liberation struggles of most developing countries in Africa influenced the higher education institutions of that country. Ashby (1966) observed in this regard that African universities literally copied without question the basic “pattern of British civic universities in constitution, in standards, and curricula and in social purpose... they were to be self governing societies, ... and as for their

social function, ... they were, as in England, to nurture an elite” (p. 18). As observed by Neave and van Vught (1994), this heritage then provided the context of legislative processes governing the relationships between the state and universities.

2.8.1.1 The anatomy of the State and higher education relationship

Universities in Africa were founded under specific Acts and were thus protected by the constitution of their respective countries. The objects and functions of the university in most developing countries were clearly specified in the Act. The University of East Africa Act, for example, specified *inter alia*, as:

...to assist in the preservation, transmission and increase of knowledge and in the stimulation of the intellectual life and cultural development of East Africa, to preserve academic freedom and, in particular, the right of university, or a university college to determine who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught and who may be admitted to study therein;

...to assume responsibility for university education within East Africa; to cooperate with governments or other appropriate bodies in the planned development of higher education.... (as cited in Neave & van Vught, 1994, p. 58)

Neave and van Vught (1994) pointed out that the newly independent countries had their own agenda for the new universities and apprehensions regarding the traditional Western liberal interpretation of the nature and functions of universities. An analysis of innovations in higher education in Tanzania (Omari, 1991) observed that at independence most African countries had an eye on three symbols of independence: the *national flag*, the *national airline* and the *national university* (as cited in Omari, 1994, p. 58).

Auala (as cited in Cabal, 1993) gathered ideas expressed by different African university presidents and professors:

The role of university in national development is a subject of much discussion in Africa today. History shows that most African nations have survived to accomplish at least one national university immediately after independence... Any university worthy of its name is expected to exercise a high degree of objectivity in the search for truth and advancement of knowledge. Nyerere (1980), Kamba (1983), and Ngeno (1984) see the main function of a university as playing a crucial role in solving social problems by coming down to earth and addressing the problems of ignorance, hunger, poverty, disease, and poor living conditions facing African nations.

To create an African university...involves among other things: the ordering of priorities and the deciding of the role of the university in nation building; adapting the curriculum and developing new programmes; fostering staff development programmes; deciding the responsibilities of the university in continuing education; and developing research. (p. 27)

Yesufu saw the role of the truly African university as fulfilling a number of objectives, which included the pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge; conducting research; manpower development; promoting social and economic modernization; and promoting intercontinental unity and international understanding (as cited in Cabal, 1993, p. 28).

2.8.1.2 Power and influence of universities

Neave and van Vught (1994) observed that universities were characteristically visible and prestigious institutions which competed with the political elite for power and influence in the control of national resources and the political processes in any given country. Commenting on the experience of most universities in Africa on the sources of power and influence, Neave and van Vught stated:

The State instituted all kinds of control and domination mechanism, including making the Head of State the Chancellor of the university with powers to appoint the senior officials of the university and several key Council members whose loyalty and accountability was to the Head of State rather than the university. The Chancellor, as head of the institution, had powers to direct the affairs of the university from State House. During graduations, they gave advice and instructions to the university on how to behave, bearing in mind that in

African elder traditions, an advice is an order (Mazrui, 1978). A Vice-Chancellor appointed by Head of State would be lunatic and take great risks in ignoring advice given during graduation ceremonies as that is where major policy pronouncements affecting universities are made. (p. 59)

Most of the countries in Southern Africa, having been colonized by the British, founded their universities along the British system, having the Head of State as its Chancellor, with a controlling management interest in the university. Being a Chancellor of a university may be a ceremonial appointment in the Western universities, but could be a different story in Africa.

In addition to the political influence, UNESCO (1991) observed that external forces had tremendous impact on the life of universities. For example, it was impossible to study the financial situation of universities in developing countries without analyzing the consequences they suffer from debt and structural adjustment policies. Furthermore, as universities were not isolated from societies, UNESCO discovered that many of the universities' problems were a reflection of the changing world. Pursuing their mission of, for example, training young people to respond to the needs of society required continuous reflection on structures and programmes and the ability to adapt to new needs.

UNESCO (1991) also noted that economic development could not follow rigid structures and use only one model for all countries and regions. This resulted in the failure of cooperation strategies based on the transmission of models in, for example, Africa with old colonial systems. On the African continent, the adoption of foreign concepts and values and the neglect of regional and national cultures and philosophies have had negative repercussions on societal systems. Thus foreign assistance was not

needed to solve problems, but to create indigenous capacity, and the universities were the key players (Cabal, 1993).

2.8.2 Management of Higher Education in Developing Countries

As previously pointed out, autonomy, control, and coordination of higher education is often characterized by an interplay of three forces, *market forces*, *state authority*, and *academic oligarchy* (Clark, 1983). In developing countries, the state tends to assume a major role in the control and coordination of higher education because “the market forces are not sufficiently robust and the young and fragile governments have not developed enough confidence in themselves” (Omari, 1994, p. 55). van Vught (1994) observed:

In developing countries, the state control model of higher education appears to be predominant...government heavily regulates and controls higher education institutions. Even in countries where initially the state supervision model was introduced, very often now governments appear to have installed the state control model. (p. 1)

Neave and van Vught (1994) further observed that the private sector was still dormant, even though in some countries they were starting to have an influence in the evolution of programmes. Therefore, the locus of struggle for control was between the state and university communities since the state was the funder of universities and the main employer of graduates.

Utilizing the schemata of Clark (1983) presented earlier in this review, Omari (1991) depicts the location of higher education in several Eastern and Southern African countries, as shown in Figure 2.3. The authority in the university system of the entire East and Southern African countries depicted in this study were mainly influenced by

the *state*, with academic oligarchy exerting some influence and market forces being absent.

However, the influence of the State on the universities was not all rosy. Neave and van Vught (1994) pointed out that in the sub-Saharan Africa, the potential areas of friction between universities and the State in developing countries included:

- *academic freedom*, which was classically defined as the right to determine who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught by the university, and who may be admitted to the university;
- the *appointments* of key university officials such as the vice chancellor or university president, deputy or pro vice-chancellor, registrar, principals, deans of faculties, directors, council and senate members;
- the determination of *enrollment growth rates*, including the types of faculties to be established;
- the determination of *quality* of life in universities;
- the general *day-to-day management*, including finances and other resources;

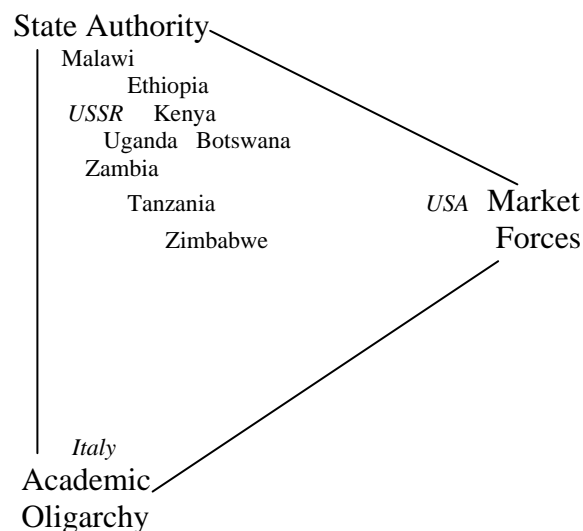


Figure 2.3: The Triangle of Authority in the University System

From: Government and higher education relationships across three continents: The winds of change (Omari, 1994, p. 55)

- the management of *student crises*, expulsions, rustication and university closures;
- the use of *state security* and other means of coercion on the university campus;
- the *management of staff*, including promotions, mix (by sex, ethnicity, expatriates, and nationalities) and their movements;
- *freedom to criticize* the state, freedom of association and assembly on campuses – for example, student unions; and
- freedom to *invite guest speakers* of whatever leaning, including from the opposition parties. (p. 56)

These have been areas for friction, clashes, and differences in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and other developing countries in the sub-Saharan Africa, “as the state has tried to have an upper hand on most of these issues at the cost of acute vexation to university staff and students. This has resulted in intermittent closure of the university” (p. 56)

2.8.3 Achievements of Universities in Africa

Amonoo-Neizer (1998) observed that despite the limited resources and still very young by world standards, the African universities had accomplished a great deal in the first phase of their existence. According to Seddoh, (2003), the number of African universities “grew from 20 in the 1960’s to 120 in 1997” (p. 33), with a corresponding rise in enrollments; expatriate staff had largely been replaced with indigenous members; universities developed relevant curricula, so as to reflect priorities of their countries, and specialized university research units had been established to foster mature intellectual communities (Amonno-Neizer, 1998).

Siwela (1999) pointed out that based on the spread of the disciplines and nature of the curricula, most of the missions and objectives the universities set in the earlier years of their establishment were achieved, as a result of university education being

accorded high priority in budgetary allocation in the education sector. As African nations were tackling adverse economic environment, universities were looked upon as:

Engines of economic growth and development, expected to develop a human resource of cadres who, through research and scholarship, could help develop productive enterprises which would be professionally managed and would contribute to industrial growth and therefore to the improvement of the general social-economic condition of the nations that created them. (Siwela, 1999, p. 2)

Seddoh (2003) agreed that universities were often the most efficient institutions in given countries, as they harboured most of the research capabilities and technical expertise and had the skills, equipment, and a mandate to generate new knowledge through research. Seddoh further noted that in most African countries, universities were the principal reservoirs of skilled human resources and that “African universities were among the key actors in national development” (p. 1). Among the principal products of the African universities, Seddoh listed the national political officials, public administrators, business managers, secondary school teachers, private and public health personnel.

2.8.4 Challenges for Higher Education in Africa

Having successfully accomplished their initial phase of development as mandated at the time of their political independence, the African universities had to reassess the mission and objectives as a result of changes in the world, in Africa, and in the universities themselves. Saint (1992) observed that internationally, the emergence of global markets had created a competitive world economic system characterized by rapid knowledge generation and technical innovation. These changes, according to Saint, affected local labour markets and the types of skills required. Saint also pointed out that within Africa, high population growth rates and increased access to education boosted

the social demand for higher education, leading to rising university enrollments and proliferation of tertiary institutions. Universities have also changed, becoming mass-based and diversified institutions operating under severe financial constraints.

Sherman (1993) argued that although African universities had made great strides in achieving their goals and objectives, years of trying to *do too much with too little* had taken a toll on the African universities' general ability to deliver services and achieve the far-reaching ideals. Further, problems were experienced in these universities because European educational systems were transplanted into African contexts and were alien to the existing social structure. Amonoo-Neizer (1998) observed:

In the eyes of African countries, the heritage of the European models of higher education more and more became a form of cultural dependence, inappropriate to their conditions and which tied African universities to international networks controlled by others, an example of what the first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, would term neo-colonialism. (p. 302)

There is need for a review of the African universities' management despite the deserved merit in their initial stages' performance. As Amonoo-Neizer (1998) asserted, "a more difficult second phase of adaptation, reformation, transformation, and revitalization awaits them and that in many countries, conditions regarding these issues have so deteriorated to the point where urgent action is now needed by all stake-holders" (p. 2). In fact, "the first impression one gets of an African university campus in the 1990s is one of all-pervading state of physical, managerial and intellectual dilapidation" (Ajayi et al. (1996) p. 145). Coombe (as cited in Ajayi et al., 1996) added to the sentiments expressed above:

For the concerned Africans anywhere and the most senior academics in the older African universities, there is indeed an unmistakable sense of loss, amounting almost to grief, as they compare the present state of their universities with the

vigor, optimism, and pride which these same institutions displayed twenty or thirty years ago. (p.145)

Seddoh (2003) observed that the main problem confronting higher education in Africa was that its quality had declined significantly due to declining resources during periods of growing enrollments.

Sub-Saharan African universities face a number of problems to varying degrees. According to Amonoo-Neizer (1998), these problems can be classified into several main areas, including: rising student enrolments, diminishing financial resources, quality slippage, politics, leadership, and relevance. They are discussed in turn below.

2.8.4.1 Rising student enrolments

Enrolments are often increasing faster than the capacity to plan for and accommodate this growth. University student population on the continent grew by sixty-one per cent between 1980 and 1990 (Saint, 1992). The influx of more students than a university has been designed for can only lead to overcrowding, poor teaching, impoverished research, frustrated and embittered students and academic staff, and unsatisfactory service to the community (Ajayi et al., 1996).

2.8.4.2 Diminishing financial resources

Current patterns of higher education expenditure are unstable in many cases. Amonoo-Neizer (1998) stated that universities have to be managed with considerable reduced resources – financial, material, and human. During the 1980s, the capacity of African governments to finance public services fell sharply. Higher education suffered

as a consequence, with cutbacks in research, staff development, library acquisitions and maintenance prompted by rising enrollments (Saint, 1992).

2.8.4.3 Quality slippage

The existence of senior academic staff contributes immensely to the quality and quantity of teaching and research in the universities, as well as their administration. A university that fails to keep its senior academic staff was likely to lag behind in innovation and creativeness, and hence perpetuate dependence on external sources for generating new ideas. Africa's universities and research institutions continue to be *robbed* of senior academics who should be providing intellectual leadership for the development of new ideas, advanced research and postgraduate supervision. These academics end up in other institutions, mostly in the Western universities, where resources are in abundance and their future is bright. Many African universities are left with young, inexperienced and insufficiently trained staff that lack the necessary mentors and role models to guide them (ESAURP and UNESCO-BREDA as cited in Ajayi et al., 1996).

2.8.4.4 Dysfunctional politics

Although the forces of democratization are struggling to gain ground, authoritarian governments still dominate the African continent. The political situation on the African continent inhibits freedom of thought, restricts participation of the majority of the people in the political life of their nations, and is repressive. Universities suffer from undue political interference, infringement on their autonomy and

governance, an atmosphere which is not in line with the ethos of universities (Sherman, 1993).

2.8.4.5 Uncertain leadership

The leadership of African universities has undergone tremendous change since the inception of these institutions in the colonial period. When African universities were first established, the leadership was largely in expatriate hands (Ajayi et al., 1996). Today, the leadership of African universities at the level of vice-chancellor, rector, or president has been largely indigenised, but the turnover of vice-chancellors in some universities has been high due to mostly political interference. As Peil (as cited in Ajayi et al., 1996) observed, this hinders the long-term development of the university because vital leaders do not remain to see plans through. Leadership turnover has also been high at the faculty and departmental levels, causing teaching and research programmes to suffer, as newcomers institute reforms and then disappears just as the results are beginning to emerge (p. 240).

2.8.4.6 Questionable relevance

The relevance of universities to national needs is a growing concern for both government and citizens. Relevance is understood to include educational programmes that are meaningful to the national economy and in tune with prevailing labour market, some capacity for critical and innovative thinking on issues of national importance, the transmission of essential professional and cultural values, institutional process and behaviour that equip graduates for leadership in society, and regional, gender, and ethnic representation in the composition of staff and students, and in the content

curricula. Rising graduate unemployment, inadequate performance on the job, and weak research production combine to bring the relevance of universities under growing scrutiny (Ajayi et al., 1996; Amonoo-Neizer, 1998).

Siwela (1999) pointed out that African universities were faced with new challenges in a knowledge based on rapidly changing global environment and success in a highly competitive global environment depended on the extent to which the universities were able to timely respond to the challenges in the new millennium. Siwela concluded by suggesting that “unlike in the past, universities will need to regularly carry out institutional reform and even transformation in some cases in order to remain relevant to the developmental needs and aspirations of their nations” (p. 2). The next section outlines some of the reforms.

2.8.5 Reforms in African universities

Altbach (as cited in Sherman, 1993) defined *university reform* as “a process of planned change in higher education” and as usually referring to “change of a basic or structural nature, aimed at improving aspects of the academic environment” (p. 6). For the African situation, this definition, according to Sherman (1993) needs to be extended to include the improvement of the larger environment because of the role higher education plays in society, in terms of the political, socio-cultural and technological advancement.

In order to address these concerns, African nations must first answer *three* questions: the kind of university they want, the kind of university they need and the kind of university they can afford (Saint, 1992). Even though the answers will differ from country to country, in accordance with national circumstances, culture, and

priorities, with varying emphases, “a general consensus in Africa holds that its principal higher education issues are quality, relevance, finances, efficiency, equity, and governance” (p. 2).

A number of reforms are needed for the African university. Saint (1992) recommended the likely areas for reform as:

- *policy framework*: a set of a few policy parameters to guide the development of higher education; and possible areas to address include growth, access, financing, graduate output, governance, and accreditation
- *system differentiation*: as Africa’s higher education systems move from elite to mass orientations, they must decide on how best to incorporate growing student enrollment in ways that meet social demand and respond to labour market needs while meeting the test of efficient resource use
- *balancing enrollment with financing*: to preserve quality as the demand for higher education expands faster than governments’ ability to provide it, a financial pact between universities and their governments is proposed, thus linking enrolment to budget availability
- *financial diversification*: to develop and pursue strategies for financial diversification as a means of ensuring greater institutional stability and autonomy, and of generating the additional resources needed to launch reform initiatives
- *university autonomy*: greater autonomy, especially in financial administration of the universities, is needed to provide the incentives necessary to encourage quality performance, management efficiency, and innovations in the face of change
- *improved governance structures*: universities need to become more responsive to the needs of government and society to justify the investments made in them by allowing greater participation by interested parties from within and outside the university
- *more professional management* at all levels: through staff training, strategic hiring, and computerized management information systems is the best short-term strategy for freeing resources (through improved efficiency) to meet university needs
- *strategic university plans*: based on revised mission statements concerning the future role and contribution of universities to national development in Africa. (p. 129)

Despite the fact that these recommendations were made twelve years ago, they are still relevant for most universities in the Sub-Saharan region. As can be noted from the *agenda* of reforms, the road ahead is challenging but not impossible. As suggested by

Saint, “the specific form that the specific actions can take is clearly the responsibility of each government and the institution concerned” (p. 129). Reform in the African universities, though slow and sometimes painful, is a necessity, otherwise the institutions are likely to disappear.

2.9 Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy in African Universities

Ajayi et al. (1996) observed that the main dangers to academic freedom and university autonomy emanated from undemocratic governments who were intolerant to other people’s views and tended to suppress academic freedom and infringement of university autonomy. According to Ajayi et al., experience had shown that whereas there were continuous threats to academic freedom, what had afflicted many African universities more were the outrageous and blatant violations of their autonomy. The overall situation was that there had been “a noticeable decline of academic freedom in the sense of direct threats, personal harassment, and physical attacks on academics in some African countries, and a serious escalation of more frequent and more brutal violations of university autonomy” (p. 248).

In his analysis of the African situation, Sawyerr (1994) observed that:

The distinguishing features of the general conditions under which African academics work include: *first* the absence of social democracy, strong civil society institutions or a well-grounded tradition of intellectual freedom and university autonomy; and *second* a situation of extreme material deprivation for both the individual academic and for the institution in which he or she works. Most such academics are consequently engaged in a constant struggle to make ends meet, usually moonlighting to supplement meager incomes, often unable to devote enough attention to scholarly work, and dependent on outside agencies, including foreign donors. The result is a general loss of morale and *intellectual curiosity*, which also affects the quality of instructions. Institutional deprivation for its part results in the absence of minimum infrastructure for intellectual work. (p. 283-284)

In Africa, there is little legislative or other legal provision dealing explicitly with academic freedom in most jurisdictions. For example, Degni-Segui (1996) stated that the 4th Republican Constitution of Ghana specifically included academic freedom as part of freedom of belief and conscience, and protected it as one of the entrenched general fundamental freedoms (Art. 21(1) (b)). Cote d'Ivoire showed a different model as the notion of academic freedom and university autonomy were introduced by the explicit incorporation of French law and practice on the subject (p. 284).

The legal position in relation to autonomy, however, seems to be much clearer. In the countries following the English tradition, the relevant legislation usually provides for a large measure of freedom for institutions of higher learning to regulate their affairs in all conventional areas: enrolment criteria, curriculum, examinations, the award of degrees and diplomas, appointment, promotion and discipline of faculty and staff, etc.

In addition to national legislation, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights provides extensively for the conventional freedoms, including those of expression, association, movement and the right to education. Although the Charter raises a host of jurisprudential problems, especially on the relation between the charter and national laws, it has been argued that the human rights provisions and standards set out in the Charter, which has been ratified by virtually all African countries, are accessible to academics, as to other people, and some suggestions have been made about how advantage could be taken of the Charter. (Sawyerr, 1996, p. 284)

In Africa, the concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy are recognized, at least in principle, in all countries, even where there is no explicit legislature provision. For example, in Nigeria, courts have established that the government could not just dismiss or retire or forcibly transfer academics whom it perceives as having political views of which it disapproves (Busia, 1996, p. 24). It is important to note that the courts acted strictly within national legislation, rather than relying on any general principles of

academic freedom and university autonomy. Thus, the decisions can easily be reversed by appropriate legislative amendments.

Just as in the Western cultures, threat to academic freedom and university autonomy in Africa does not come exclusively from the State. Ajayi et al., (1996) observed that threats may emanate from other bodies, public, private, social or religious. “Society as a whole may threaten academia by putting demands on it that it cannot legitimately meet” (p. 248). According to Mazrui (as cited in Sawyerr, 1996), significant threats have come from civil society, for example, the role of Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the period before the collapse of the Empire, and of the Dutch Reformed Church in apartheid South Africa. Muslim fundamentalism posed very real threats to intellectual freedom in Algeria and other North African countries (Khan, 1994; El Kenz, 1996), with tragic consequences (p. 285).

Throughout the colonial and independence periods, higher education in Africa has been State supplied and financed. The dominant role of the state has its origins in colonial policies in Anglophone and Francophone Africa intended to control educational expansion to ensure that higher education institutions did not become producers of unemployed graduates. In Africa, most secondary and all higher education was the state’s responsibility from the outset and is still the case now.

Sawyerr (1994) drew a schematic presentation of the constraints on academic freedom and university autonomy in Africa. The *first* constraint was external interference and included first, external interference by the state, through:

- domination of government bodies;
- appointment of Vice-Chancellors and other leaders of institutions in many cases, especially in Francophone countries;

- interference in university management, for instance through pressure to increase enrolment (without commensurate increase in subvention);
- attempts to control freedom of expression and association, and use of the power of the purse. (p. 286)

Sawyer further looked at external interference by civil society, especially established religion, and then external interference through material deprivation, resulting in the dilution of commitment to intellectual endeavour and the absence of the resources necessary for minimum academic work. Institutional governance issues, frustrating the full development of faculty, especially younger and female faculty, were the other constraints (p. 286).

Some of the observations by Sawyerr (1994) were also shared by Ashby (1966). Ashby pointed out that a danger to university autonomy was coming from two quarters: interference from outside the university by acts of parliament and by betrayal from inside by authorities of the university which usurp functions delegated by legislation or convention to academic body.

According to Ashby (1966),

The university constitutions which have failed to safeguard the autonomy of African universities are closely modeled on the constitutions of English civic universities. All of them, as in England, provide for a council that is supreme governing body of the university. The councils include a majority of laymen, some nominated by official agencies – federal or regional governments. All of them have senates, to which are delegated certain powers and responsibilities for academic affairs, including some of those deemed essential if a university is to be considered autonomous. (p. 336)

Ashby (1966) further argued that the constitutional patterns borrowed from English civic universities fail to guarantee autonomy in Africa for several reasons. *First*, in African countries, constitutional patterns were embodied in acts of parliament, which could be changed by governments ‘at the stroke of a pen’ without consultation with the

university. *Second*, their wording was in places positively misleading as a guide to procedure. For example, the University Council was to ‘give directions’ to the Senate. In the West, there could be no problem with the word; in Africa, however, the interpretation would be a duty laid upon the Council, whose members would feel obliged to ‘give directions’ when they thought fit. *Third*, there was an inherent ambiguity in the idea of an autonomous university whose governing body contained a majority of non-academics appointed from outside. In England, when the university council meets, the laymen serving on it really identify themselves with the university; they personify themselves with the community and not as agents of outside pressure groups; they are the strongest defence the university has against interference from government or damage from misconceived public opinion. In most African countries, there had been occasions when laymen on university governing bodies have been unduly influenced by specific interests outside the university, let alone shelter themselves or the university from political pressures (pp. 336-337).

2.10 Conceptual Framework for the Study

A conceptual framework is used to guide the search for meanings and is useful in directing the research process. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that the next step after concepts have been discussed is to identify how these concepts are linked to each other in a theoretical model.

Several authors have outlined the conditions necessary for an autonomous university. James (1965) noted that five *elements* were essential: (a) the right to select faculty and staff; (b) the responsibility for the selection of students; (c) the responsibility for the formulation of curricula and the setting of academic standards; (d)

decisions in research programs; and (e) the responsibility for financial allocation. (p. viii). Ashby (1966) analyzed the *ingredients* of institutional autonomy by classifying six essential dimensions of an autonomous university: (a) freedom to select its students; (b) freedom to recruit its staff; (c) freedom to set its own standards; (d) freedom to decide on whom to award degrees; (e) freedom to design its curriculum; and (f) freedom to decide how to allocate incomes received from the State or private sources (p. 293-296). In addition, Ashby pointed out that “full autonomy requires that non-academic members of self-government bodies represent the interests of the institution, not the interests of external parties” (p. 296).

Ajayi et al. (1996) outlined the *areas* to be protected for institutional autonomy and suggested that an autonomous university should be able to:

- be free to select its students and its staff and to determine the conditions under which they remain in the university
- set its own standards and decide to whom to award its degrees, even if universities voluntarily set limits to their own freedom by appointment of external examiners
- design its own curriculum, although it may in practice have to do within certain constraints
- have the final decisions as to the research programmes carried on within its walls
- be free to decide how to allocate its income from state and private sources among the different categories of expenditure. (p. 224)

Frazier (1997) specified that a look at autonomy should be qualified by reference to some *attributes* of the institutions in question and specified the following features: (a) the legal status of the institution; (b) academic authority (how the institution obtains its authority to operate and to make academic awards); (c) mission; (d) governance; (e) financial authority; (f) employment; and (g) academic decentralization (does the institution determine the admission of students; does the

institution have the authority to establish new programmes; does the institution determine its curriculum?) (p. 350). Frazier emphasized that an absolute condition of being autonomous was being accountable.

James' (1965) elements of university autonomy, Ashby's (1966) ingredients of institutional autonomy, Ajayi's et al., (1996) list of areas to be protected for institutional autonomy and Frazier's (1997) attributes of institutional autonomy were grouped into six main categories: *governance*, *administration matters*, *finance matters*, *personnel matters*, *academic matters* and *student matters*. These formed the areas of the study. Additionally, the focus for this study was directed at autonomy as experienced at three levels of university operations: the University Council, the University Office, and the constituent colleges.

In the conceptual framework for this study, university autonomy was defined and characterized according to (a) decision areas and (b) extent of centralization. Table 2.1 contains the conceptual framework in the form of a 4 x 6 matrix, with the extent of centralization of decision-making at the university and the decision areas, representing the two axes of the matrix. In the model, autonomy is conceptualized as a continuum from fully centralized decision-making for each area to a fully decentralized system. In this continuum, four stages (A to D) were defined for each of the six areas.

As illustrated in Table 2.1, the six decision areas of governance, administration matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters have been identified. *Governance* refer to the function of defining the overall mission of the university, setting broad strategic goals and bearing ultimate responsibility for the

Table 2.1

Conceptual Framework for an investigation of University Autonomy

	Highly Centralized (Low Autonomy)	Predominantly Centralized	Predominantly Decentralized	Highly Decentralized (High Autonomy)
Decision Area	C o n t i n u u m -----→			
Governance	Direct control by owner: govt/ private	Governance through Council, consisting of govt's/owner's appointees, primarily carrying out orders	Governance through Council, appointed by govt/owner, but not subservient to govt/owner	Independently constituted Council, making independent decisions
Administrative Matters	Direct administration by govt/owner, who also sets the rules for administration of the university	Management through Chief Administrator and other Officers appointed by govt/owner, who wields significant influence over administrative decisions	Limited powers decentralized to University Administrators; Govt/Owner still wields some influence over administrative decisions	Independent administration operating under Council's directions, with significant independent decision-making capacity
Financial Matters	Full funding by govt/owner; govt/owner has financial control	Govt/owner funding plus funds through other sources; significant govt/owner control	Govt/Owner subsidy plus funds through other sources; some govt/owner influence but finances generally under Council's control	Self-financing; no govt/owner subsidy; funds entirely under Council control; significant independent decision-making capacity for administrators
Personnel Matters	Staff appointed by govt/owner; completely under govt's/owner's regulatory control	Staff are employed by Council but subject to govt's/owner's regulations	Staff are employed by Council and subject primarily to the Council's regulations; also influenced by govt's/ owner's regulations	Staff employed by Council; all conditions and regulations set by Council; administrators have significant decision-making capacity
Academic Matters	Academic issues – discipline, curriculum, etc set and controlled by govt/owner	University responsible for discipline and curriculum but seek approval from govt/owner	University decides on academic issues within set regulations by govt/owner	University free to decide on disciplines, curriculum, courses; no govt/owner approval procedures before starting a new programme
Student Matters	Student recruitment approved by govt/owner who sets the rules and regulations	University conducts the selection, decide on student numbers, level of tuition and fees; subject to govt/owner approval	Student selection, numbers, tuition and fee levels, done by University following govt/owner rules and regulations	University determines its own entrance capacity; selects its own students; determines own level of tuition and fees

Note. Adapted from *Hospital Autonomy in Ghana: The Experience of Korle Bu and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospitals* (Govindaraj, Obuobi, Enyimayew, Antwi and Ofosu-Ammah, 1996) and *The paradigms of governance in higher education systems* (McDaniel, 1996).

university's operational policies. *Administrative* matters refer to the responsibilities involved in the day-to-day running of the university and the discharge of the functions defined by the mission statement. *Financial* matters refer to the generation of resources for the running of the university and the proper planning, accounting and allocation of these resources. *Personnel* matters refer to the recruitment and allocation of faculty members and determination of their qualifications and salaries. *Student* matters refer to how many and type of students the university may enroll as well as their disciplining. The defining characteristics of each of the six areas are outlined in the corresponding cell of the matrix. As was shown in Chapter 3, the research questions for the data collection were essentially designed in the light of these six decision area categories.

2.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter on literature review, the history of the university was reviewed in line with Newman's idea of a university. The university was defined as an organized, self-governing community of scholars, established to preserve, transmit, and extend knowledge. The three functions of the university – teaching (knowledge transfer), research (knowledge discovery) and public service (knowledge application) – were discussed in line with the different views of the university (instrumental, autonomist and mutually interdependent roles) within society.

The nature of university culture (critical thinking, interest in knowledge for its own sake, exhaustive inquiry, specialized knowledge, disputation, openness, honesty, reflection, respect for intellectual property, critique, collegiality, academic freedom) were outlined. University governance models as discussed by several authors: Clark's

triangle of coordination, Neave and van Vught state control, state supervision, process and product control, and Watt's university management were outlined.

The issues of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and accountability were discussed. It is a widely held view that universities should have a high degree of autonomy, to be free to make the decisions necessary for their essential business by their own procedures without external influence. However, since no country in the world has a government that does not retain some control over its universities and that universities are public services, the question is on the extent of government control and where that control should be exercised. The development and experience of the universities in Africa were discussed. The establishment, management, achievements, challenges, and reforms of higher education in Africa were outlined.

Finally, a conceptual framework for the study was outlined, using two dimensions: the extent of centralization of decision making (centralized to decentralized) and the six main areas of institutional autonomy (governance matters, administration matters, finance matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters) as delimited through the work of several authors: James (1965), Ashby (1966), Ajayi et al., (1996), and Frazier (1997).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology that was used for investigating the institutional autonomy in the University of Malawi is described. The justification of the methodology will be discussed first and this will be followed by a discussion of the case study as a research tool. Data collection techniques, methods and analyses will also be presented. Finally, consideration will be given to the notions of validity, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

Merriam (1998) noted that research can be broadly defined as an inquiry and to help guide the inquiry there are numerous well-tested designs and techniques that can be used. Owens (1982) observed that research design involved a critical decision-making process. The choice began with two paradigms of systematic inquiry: (a) a rationalistic paradigm which embraced logical-positivist views and deductive thinking, and (b) a naturalistic paradigm, which embraced phenomenological views and inductive thinking to seek knowledge and understanding of social and organizational phenomena.

Owens argued that there was no one best method. Palys (1992) suggested that the best method depended on the nature of one's research objectives, attributes of the

phenomena under consideration and the constraints of the situation. However, it was important that the research perspective matches the purposes of the research conducted.

3.2.1 Research Methodology

In order to find answers to issues and problems, researchers have used a number of approaches. They choose a methodology on which to frame their research. According to Duncan (2004), “to ensure that the methodology is the best choice, we need to focus on understanding our reasons for using particular method, the context in which it might be most effective, and how the research outcome might be affected” (p. 111). Shulman (1988a) advocated against educational researchers who were slavishly committed to some particular method and suggested that the first step was to understand the problem and decide what questions to ask. Choosing the mode of disciplined inquiry most appropriate to answering the research questions would then follow.

Creswell (2003) identified *qualitative*, *quantitative*, and *mixed- methods* as the most common approaches to research design and the choice was based on the purpose of the study and the research question.

3.2.1.1 Qualitative inquiry

Mayan (2001) suggested that qualitative inquiry was most often used:

- to describe a phenomenon about which little is known
- to capture meaning (data are collected in the form of feelings, behaviour, thoughts, insights, and actions rather than in the form of numbers) and,
- to describe a process rather than an outcome. (pp. 5-6)

Qualitative inquiry opened up the opportunity to go beyond the numbers (questionnaires) to answer the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ questions (Mayan, 2001).

Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as:

An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes the words, reports detailed views of informants and accounts the study conducts the study in natural setting. (p. 15).

Patton (1990) observed that qualitative inquiry explored the experiences of people in their everyday lives. It was known as *naturalistic inquiry*, as it was used to understand naturally occurring states. Mayan (2001) pointed out that qualitative data came from a very in-depth look at phenomenon.

3.2.1.2 Quantitative inquiry

Mayan (2001) observed that for quantitative inquiry, data came in the form of numbers such that, when interpreted, helped explain the phenomenon. Commenting on both *qualitative* and *quantitative* methods, Mayan pointed out that “both inquiries are important and illuminate different aspects of the problem” (p. 6). In order to maximize the understanding of the nature of institutional autonomy in the UNIMA, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

The main thrust of the research focussed on the collection and analysis of *qualitative* data, collected through face-to-face interviews, using semi-structured interview guides as reported in Chapter 5. The *quantitative* element of the study was the collection of data through the use of a questionnaire in order to enrich the qualitative findings. The results of the questionnaire analyses are also reported in Chapter 5.

3.2.1.3 Mixed methods of inquiry

This method incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research traditions and combines them in unique ways to answer research questions. Husen (1999)

observed that “researchers were recognizing that education did not take place in a social vacuum” (p. 38) and that educational practices could not be isolated from social and cultural contexts. As a result, inflexible espousment of one particular paradigm was detrimental to the spirit of inquiry. Shulman (1988a) admonished that educational researchers were to avoid becoming slavishly committed to some particular method and advised understanding the problem, deciding what questions require to be asked, and then choosing the “mode of disciplined inquiry most appropriate to those questions” (p. 15).

Contemporary researchers are encouraged to use mixed methodology designs in educational settings since generally the contexts are too complex to be examined with just one lens. Mathie and Greene (2002) observed,

Mixing methods signifies the incorporation of multiple, diverse ways of knowing and valuing with the same study, so that the resultant claims to know are broader, deeper, and wiser. Mixed method-inquiry, that is, implies openness to other views and perspectives, not just to rival explanatory hypotheses, but more profoundly to rival ways of thinking and valuing. Good mixed-method inquiry actively invites diverse ways of thinking and valuing to dialogue and to work in concert with one another toward better understanding. (p. 141)

Shulman (1988b) reflected, “ways of seeing are ways of knowing and of not knowing; and knowing well is knowing in more than a single way” (p. 23). Thus, there is no one best research method. Janesick (2000) compared research design to the choreography of a dance, observing “a good choreographer captures the complexity of the dance/story by using rigorous and tested procedures and in fact refuses to be limited to one approach to choreography” (p. 379). Just as the steps of a dance must match the tempo of the music, the choice of the methods depends on the objectives of the research, the constraints of the situation on the nature and the attributes of the phenomena under consideration. The

research perspective must tie in with the purpose of the research conducted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lather, 1991). In order not to examine the institutional autonomy as it was operationalized in UNIMA from just one lens, mixed methods were used in this study.

3.2.2. Choosing a “tradition of inquiry”

Various approaches can be used to collect and analyze data. Out of the eight traditions of inquiry outlined by Merriam (2002, pp. 6-10), the case study approach, was deemed suitable. As the purpose of this study was to understand the *nature of institutional autonomy in the University of Malawi*, the task required an in-depth examination of the decision making process in UNIMA, and how this process was also influenced by UNIMA’s *external* stakeholders. As observed by Patton (1990), case studies are particularly useful “where one needed to understand some particular problem or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information” (p. 54). Merriam (1998) concurred by observing that “a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19).

3.2.2.1 Justification for choice of case study

The choice of using a case study approach was justified from a number of considerations. The *first* justifier was the nature of the research question. Yin (1994) stated that “case studies are preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). The study on the nature of

institutional autonomy of UNIMA was a ‘what’ question and according to Yin, was best studied (and understood) by a case study.

The *second* justifier was the amount of control. Merriam (1998) observed that in experimental research, there was a great deal of control over the research situation in that the researcher manipulated the variables of interest in order to investigate cause-and-effect relationships. However, in qualitative research, Merriam pointed out:

The less control a researcher has over ‘a contemporary set of events’, and/or if the variables are so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time, the more likely the case study is to be the best choice. (p. 32)

In this study, descriptions were sought to obtain an explanation of autonomy and no variables were manipulated in this process.

The *third* justification of a case study design related to the information to be obtained. Bromley (as cited in Merriam, 1998) stated:

Case studies, by definition, get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires), whereas experiments and surveys often use convenient derivative data, for example test results, official records. Also, case studies tend to spread the net for evidence widely, whereas experiments and surveys usually have a narrow focus. (p. 32-33)

In the study, of crucial importance was the perception of the respondents regarding institutional autonomy in UNIMA and not how true or accurate (by some standard) the account was.

The *fourth* justification for this methodology related to the desired end product. Merriam (1988) stated that this factor was linked to the nature of the question, and raised several questions that come into play when one attempts to select the most appropriate research design:

Will the results be presented as the end product of a cause-and-effect investigation? Will the end product be a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon? Or quantification of the extent and nature of certain variables with a population? Or a historical analysis? (p. 9).

Merriam then concluded that “the end product of a case study is a rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study” (p. 11). It was hoped that in this study, a ‘rich, thick description’ of institutional autonomy at UNIMA would be the end product.

The *last* justification was whether or not a bounded system could be identified as the focus of the investigation. Merriam (1988) observed:

A case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as programme, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue or hypothesis...A case might also be selected because it is intrinsically interesting and one would study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible. (p. 10)

Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (as cited in Merriam, 1998), stated that “the most straightforward examples of ‘bounded systems’ are those in which the boundaries have a common sense of obviousness, such as an individual teacher, a single school, or an innovatory programme” (p. 28). In the study of UNIMA autonomy, the *case* (institutional autonomy) was *bounded* within the University of Malawi.

Having justified the choice of the case study as the most appropriate design for investigating the institutional autonomy in UNIMA, the next section discussed the case study and how it applied to the study.

3.2 The Case Study

A case study was described as a detailed examination of one setting or single subject, a single depository of documents or one particular event (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). According to Feagin, Orum, &

Sjoberg (1991), the case study was an ideal approach when a holistic, in-depth investigation was needed as it offered the opportunity for in-depth study of a phenomenon in a particular context thereby providing insights on the issue under investigation. Yin (1994) suggested that “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (p. 13). Merriam (1998) considered the case study research as “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2).

Yin (1994) emphasized the importance of studying a phenomenon in its natural context by observing that “case studies typically involve investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Yin argued for these boundaries to be clarified as part of the case study. In this study, the phenomenon, *autonomy*, was bounded within the membership of the University. However, just as other universities are interdependent with other institutions, UNIMA’s autonomy was also influenced by some external institutions.

3.2.1 Components of Case Study

Merriam (1998) synthesized a number of case study characteristics from various sources. Merriam suggested case study had four fundamental components:

- *Particularistic*: the case study focuses on a particular situation, an event, programme or phenomenon. The case itself is considered important for its potential to reveal or represent a general pattern
- *Descriptive*: the end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study; expressed in a variety of ways in order to capture the complexities of a situation

- *Heuristic*: the case study illuminates a reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study, bringing about new meaning, extending a reader's experience, or confirming what is known
- *Inductive*: the case study relies on inductive reasoning, as generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an examination of data. A qualitative case study is characterized by "discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification or predetermined hypotheses. (pp. 29-30)

This study on UNIMA displayed all the four properties. The study was *particularistic* in that it focused on the autonomy of one university in Africa, the University of Malawi. It was *descriptive* in the sense that the study aimed at providing a rich, thick description of how the respondents viewed autonomy in UNIMA. The study was *heuristic* because the case had the potential for extending a reader's understanding of the subject matter, especially, the interaction between the Government and UNIMA. Finally, the study was *inductive* since the conceptual constructs were derived out of the evidence presented in the study.

3.2.2 Types of Case Study

Yin (1993) specified three types of case studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive:

An *exploratory* case study is aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent (not necessarily case) study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A *descriptive* case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. An *explanatory* case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships – explaining which cause produces which relationship. (p. 5)

Stake (2000) also identified three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. According to Stake:

Intrinsic case study is undertaken because...the researcher wants a better understanding of this particular case. It is undertaken because the case itself is of

interest...The purpose is not to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon...[nor is it] theory building, although at other times, the researcher may do just that". *Instrumental* case studies aims to provide insight into an issue or to re-draw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supporting role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary detailed, but all because this helps the researcher to pursue the external interest. *Collective* case study is where a researcher may jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition... It is instrumental study extended to several cases... The cases are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding and theorizing about a still larger collection of cases. (p. 437)

Using Yin's (1993) classifications, this study fell into the *descriptive* case study category since the aim of the study was to provide a perception of autonomy within UNIMA. Using Stake's (2000) categorization, the study was placed in the *instrumental* category, as its purpose was to examine in depth, the various contexts and activities that occur in the University of Malawi in order to provide insight into the issues surrounding autonomy.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Dey (as cited in Merriam, 1998) observed that "collection of data always involves selecting data and the technique of data collection...will affect what finally constitutes 'data' for the purposes of research" (p. 70). Merriam further observed that whether or not a bit of information becomes data in a research study depended solely on the interest and perspective of the investigator.

Creswell (1998) observed that "a case study involved the widest array of data collection as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case" (p. 123). Janesick (2000) commented that "a good choreographer refuses to be limited to just one approach or one technique from dance history" (p. 381). Marshall and Rossman (1995)

posited that “many qualitative studies combine several data collection methods over the course of the study (p. 99). Flick (1998) stated that “the qualitative researcher uses various techniques and rigorous and tested procedures in working to capture the nuance and complexity of the social situation under study” (as cited Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 381). For this study, the three main methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, and document reviews.

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were the primary data gathering method in this study. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain a rich description of the subject matter. The interview is one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 1994). According to Sherman and Webb (1988), “interviews permit researchers to verify, clarify, or alter...to achieve a full understanding of an incident and to take into account the ‘lived’ experience of participants” p. 125). Interviews have many forms and uses, with the most common type the individual, face-to-face verbal interchange. Other forms of interviewing can also take the form of face-to-face group interchange, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, and telephone surveys (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Given that the study involved multiple sources of data (the five constituent colleges), it was important to consider structured interviews. Fontana and Frey (2000) observed that structured interviews were based on a set of pre-set questions and “the interviewer asks all respondents the same questions, with a limited set of response categories and with little room for variation” (p. 649). Standardizing interview behaviour included the way the study was presented, how questions were asked, the manner in which inadequate answers were probed, the way answers were recorded, and

how interpersonal aspects of the interview were handled (Fowler, 1993). This ensured consistency in interviewer behaviour, which led to minimization of interviewer-variance. Fontana and Frey (2000) commented that “interviews take place in a social interaction context, which also has influence on the interview process” (p. 650). Fontana and Frey further suggested that structured interviews proceeded under a stimulus-response format, under the assumption that the respondent truthfully answered the predetermined questions to reveal adequate indicators of the variable in question, as long as those questions were properly phrased.

3.3.1.1 The Interview Guides

Using the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, the semi-structured interview guides were developed by the researcher by outlining a set of issues to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The guides served as basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics were covered. According to Patton (2002), the interview guide ensures:

- the interviewer has carefully decided how to use the available limited interview time, through delimiting in advance the issues to be explored
- the researcher is provided with a starting point from which more questions are used to further explore the topic
- topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject are provided. (p. 343)

The semi-structured interview guides were developed for both the internal infrastructure and external agencies. In terms of the *internal* infrastructure, questions were developed for each of the levels of interviewees: University Council members, University Office administrators, College Principals, Deans and Heads of Department and covered the six

main areas of *governance, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters* and *student matters*. Similarly, semi-interview guides were developed for each of the **external** stakeholder: the Regulatory bodies, Politicians, Government, Other Universities (*Appendix F*). In order to maximize opportunities for the researcher to “see situations through the eyes of the participants” (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 130), some open-ended questions (Yin, 1994) were used.

3.3.1.2 The Respondents

In this study, the researcher identified two groups of interviewees as sources of data and classified them as *internal* and *external* sources.

3.3.1.2.1 Internal Sources

Initial interviews in UNIMA were held with individuals who were identified by the researcher as those who were primarily involved in decision-making at the three levels of UNIMA: Council (independent Council members), University Office (senior administrators), and College (Principals, Deans and Heads of Department). For the study, this group formed the *internal source* of interview data, key informants, as they were directly involved with the running of the University.

The researcher visited all the constituent colleges and interviewed Heads of Department, Faculty Deans and College Administrators (Principals, Registrars and Financial Officers, where applicable). As will be shown in Chapter 4, the location of the five constituent colleges are in Blantyre (The Polytechnic and College of Medicine), in Zomba (Chancellor College) and in Lilongwe (College of Nursing and Bunda College).

In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with senior university officials and Council members at the University Central Office in Zomba.

The technique used in the study for selecting the respondents was *snowball* sampling. According to Johnson and Christensen (2000),

Snowball sampling is a technique where each research participant that volunteers to be in a research study is asked to identify one or more additional people who meet certain characteristics and may be willing to participate in the research study. Only a few individuals may be identified in the beginning of a research study as being appropriate, willing, and able participants. Over time, however, as each new participant suggests someone else who may participate, the sample becomes larger and larger. (p. 176)

In this technique, the point at which data saturation had been achieved determined the number of interviewees and the frequency of interviews. This was a point of data collection where the information the researcher got became redundant (Bogddan & Biklen, 1992).

A request to conduct the study was sent to the University Office (*Appendix C*) at the University of Malawi and they supported the study. Records at the University Office assisted the researcher to identify a core internal interviewee sample of 19, to be interviewed first. An introductory letter was sent to the core sample, which was made up of participants from all the three levels (*Appendix D*) and 14 interviewees responded positively. A consent letter (*Appendix E*) was sent to all the 14 interviewees, which was followed by an arrangement for meeting place and time. It was from these individuals that the *snowballing* process started. The process allowed the interviewer to get a wide cross-section of respondents and the final number of *internal* group of respondents increased from 14 to 32.

3.3.1.2.2 *External Sources*

Recognizing that universities do not operate in isolation, the researcher also identified those who influenced the running of the University indirectly: government officials, politicians, regulatory bodies, and the likely competition from the newly established university – University of Mzuzu (MZUNI).

As described in Chapter 4, the *external* sources of interviewees was from senior government officials (Principal Secretaries and Departmental Directors), senior university administrators of Mzuzu University, politicians (former government minister and current members of parliament) and Executive Directors and General Secretaries who managed the *four* regulatory bodies (Law Society, Nurses Council, Medical Council and Board of Engineers). The government officials were interviewed in their government offices at the Capital Hill, in Lilongwe; the senior officers of MZUNI were interviewed at the MZUNI Campus in Mzuzu; the politicians were interviewed in their Constituency Offices in Blantyre and the regulatory bodies were interviewed at their institutions in either Blantyre (Law Society and Board of Engineers) or Lilongwe (Medical Council and Nurses Council). A total of 12 interviews were conducted.

In total, the researcher conducted 44 interviews. Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of those who were interviewed for this study. Of the 44 interviews, 12 respondents (27%) came from externals and 32 respondents (73%) came from internals. An overview of the sources of interview data is shown in Chapter 4, Figure 4.5.

Each semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Malawi between May and November 2005, lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. As recommended by Patton (2002), “during the interviewing process itself, some method for recording the verbatim

responses of people being interviewed is essential” (p. 380). With the permission of the respondents, the researcher tape-recorded all the interviews and every interviewee willingly accepted the interviews being recorded. The interviews were transcribed and verified with the interviewees through a transcribed copy (*Appendices E and H* for Introductory Letter for the Participants, Letter of Consent and Transcript Release Form respectively). The researcher was the sole interviewer. The respondents found the questions acceptable and the interviews were conducted in a cordial atmosphere.

Table 3.1

The Composition of the Interview Respondents

<i>Title</i>	Council	Gvt	MZUNI	Pltc	RgB	UO	College					TOTAL
							CC	Poly	COM	KCN	Bunda	
<i>Externals</i>		4	2	2	4							12
<i>Internals</i>												
Council Members	3											3
University Office Administrators						7						7
College Administrators								2	2	1	2	7
Deans							2	2		1	1	6
HODs							1	3	1	3	1	9
TOTAL	3	4	2	2	4	7	3	7	3	5	4	44

Note: Gvt = Government; MZUNI = Mzuzu University; Pltc = Politicians; RgB = Regulatory Bodies; UO = University Office; HOD = Head of Department; CC= Chancellor College; Poly = The Polytechnic; COM = College of Medicine; KCN = Kamuzu College of Nursing; Bunda = Bunda College of Agriculture.

3.3.1.3 Pilot-test: the Interview Guide

“Although interviews provide valuable data, they are susceptible to bias” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 246). The purpose of pilot test is to ensure that the instruments will “yield reasonably unbiased data.” According to Gall et al., (2003), pilot-testing might reveal threatening questions, communication problems, evidence of inadequate motivation on the part of the respondents, which may lead to rephrasing questions or revising the procedures.

Before administering the interviews, the interview guides were trial-tested by the researcher with administrative members of staff at one of the constituent colleges who did not form part of the final interviewees of the study. The necessary adjustments were done on the interview guides and this made the questions interviewee friendly.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

The second source of data was through a questionnaire. Marshall and Rossman (1995) divided data collection methods into primary methods and the supplementary data collection techniques. According to Marshall and Rossman, the questionnaire was one of the supplementary data collection techniques and in this study, the data yielded by the questionnaire were used to supplement the semi-structured interview data.

Defining the questionnaire, Johnson and Christensen (2000) explained:

A questionnaire is a self-report data-collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study. Researchers use questionnaire so that they can obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioural intentions of research participants. (p. 127)

In this study, the purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain the participant's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and perceptions of the institutional autonomy of UNIMA. The questionnaire was adapted, by permission, from the work of D. Anderson and R. Johnson (1998): *University autonomy in twenty countries*. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the perceived *extent* of government influence on the operations of UNIMA and the information requested was for triangulation with the information from the interviews.

The questionnaire had *two* sections. The *first*, relating to the legal authority of the government to intervene, was a technical section of the questionnaire which specifically dealt with the University Act. A legal expert, who was also a member of the University Council, completed this section. The responses indicated the legal position of government as to whether or not it intervened in the decision-making process in the University. The *second* section of the questionnaire, which related to government influence, was completed by 24 of the 32 internal respondents. Specific topics addressing institutional autonomy were raised in each of the six areas (governance, administrative, financial, personnel, academic, and student matters). This section was aimed at bringing out the perception of the participants on what they thought was the *extent* of the exertion of influence by government in the decision making process on the various topics in the University. The last overall question requested the respondents to assess overall government intervention in UNIMA's mission. A sample of the questionnaire is shown in *Appendix G*.

3.3.2.1 Pilot-test: the Questionnaire

Gall et al., (2003) recommended a pilot test of the questionnaire before using it in the study. The recommendation was to administer the questionnaire to a sample of individuals from the population from which the respondents would be drawn. Criticism and recommendations for improving the questionnaire were identified after the sample was pilot-tested, and ambiguous or weak parts were redone and retested until they were understood accurately by the pilot-test sample.

The questionnaire, which was administered only to members of the University (the Council Members, University Office and College personnel), was dropped-off after the interviews and the completed questionnaires were either sent to, or collected by, the researcher.

3.3.3 Document Review

Hodder (2000) stated that written texts were of importance for qualitative research for several reasons: “in general terms, access can be easy and low cost; the information provided may differ and may not be available in spoken form; and texts endure and thus give historical insight” (p. 704). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) noted the value of documents in that they “corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy” (p. 52). For the purposes of this study, the term documents were used in this general sense and included forms of data not obtained by the interviews.

Gall et al., (2003) suggested the steps the qualitative researchers should follow in documentary and records review process:

Begin by identifying documents and records that are part of the study, deciding which materials might be relevant to the research study. Then determine how to

collect these materials for analysis within the guidelines for ethical conduct of research. If they cannot be removed from the natural situation, maybe photocopies and photographs could be used, otherwise, the researcher would need to devise a method for analyzing them on site. (p. 283)

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) recommended that document (and other) data analysis should force the researcher to:

Make decisions that narrow the study; make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish; develop analytic questions; plan data-collection sessions in light of what you find in previous observations; write “observer’s comments” about ideas you generate; write memos to yourself about what you are learning; try out ideas and themes on subjects; explore literature while in the field; and play with metaphors, analogies, and concepts; use visual devices. (pp. 148-159)

For this study, the basis for gathering documents were the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, together with the conceptual framework that guided the study. While the researcher obtained some documents prior to the interviews, most were gathered during the interview process. The study of the documents was narrowed to ‘institutional autonomy’ issues and at the end of each interview, the researcher requested for any document(s) on institutional autonomy from the respondent(s). All the ideas that were generated and observed during the interviews and document reviews were recorded and were used during the ‘writing stage’ of the study.

As the research was conducted in English in Malawi, all the documents were gathered during the data collection stage. A list of materials collected and used in the document analysis is in *Appendix J*. Since the researcher was in Malawi for a short period of time, most of the documents were photocopied for later analysis upon returning to Canada. The information gathered from the documents was compared to

what came out of the face-to-face interviews. Some of the documentary review findings are reported in Chapter 4.

3.3.4 Summary

The data collected from a qualitative study comes from observations, interviews, documents, audiovisual materials such as photographs, videotapes, and films (Johnson and Christensen, 2000). For this study, data were collected through interviews, document reviews and a questionnaire. Gall et al. (2003) contended that using multiple methods to collect data about a phenomenon enhances the validity of case study findings, and that triangulation helped to reduce or remove biases that might arise from relying entirely on any one data-collection method.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of deriving meaning from the data collected during the study. Johnson and Christensen (2000) pointed out:

Data analysis requires the reduction and interpretation of the voluminous amount of information collected. Analysis of this volume of data requires reduction to certain patterns, categories, or themes, which are then interpreted using some schema. In general, qualitative data analysis requires separating the data into smaller pieces so that a larger, consolidated picture can emerge. (p. 55)

Stake (1995) described analysis as “a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as the final compilations” (p. 71). Merriam (1998) defined data analysis as a process of making sense out of data. It can be limited to “determining how best to arrange the material into a narrative account of the findings. More commonly, researchers extend analysis to developing categories [or] themes....that interpret the meaning of the data” (p. 192). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) observed:

Data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings...Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns. (p. 147)

Miles and Huberman (1994) posited that “unless a reasonably coherent system is in place for collecting information from a range of informants, across a potential range of sites, in a roughly comparable format, the researcher will be in data management limbo very quickly” (p. 183). Basically, data analysis is working with data to give them meaning and to accomplish this goal, proper data management is essential.

Denzin (1989) observed that thick description makes thick interpretation possible: the researcher has to find a balance between analysis, interpretation and description. In this study, the interviews, document reviews and questionnaires provided a thick and rich description of the meanings made by participants during the life of the study.

3.4.1 The Process

According to Mayan (2001), “the qualitative researcher collects data, analyzes it, collects more data to fill in gaps, analyzes it, collects more data, and so on to reach saturation” (p. 21). Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative data analysis does not begin after data collection; it could overlap with data collection, provided the researcher ensures that the on-going data collection is not biased by the analysis (p. 437). The researcher should ensure that all the information that is collected during fieldwork or interviews is available and that extra copies of the data are made and stored away in a separate place (p. 441). In this study, the advances in information technology (IT) eased the data analysis and storage processes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) observed that data management is essential for a well-ordered data collection, data storage and data recovery. Proper data management ensures documentation of the analyses that has been carried out and the retention of data and associated analyses after the study is complete. Miles and Huberman explained that data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: *data reduction*, *data display* and *conclusion drawing/verification* (p. 10). The authors explained the activities as follows:

- *Data reduction* refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data from written notes or transcriptions. It is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified. This process takes place throughout the life of a qualitative study
- *Data display* is to organize and compress the information obtained for conclusion drawing and action. As with data reduction, displays too take place throughout the life of a qualitative study
- *Conclusion drawing/verification* involves making meanings out of the data, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, casual flows and propositions. This process begins while data is collected, but is verified and tested as analysis proceeds. (pp. 10-11)

Merriam (2002) agreed with Miles and Huberman (1994) and Mayan (2001) on data analysis by stating that in qualitative research, “data analysis is simultaneous with data collection. One begins analyzing data with the first interview, the first observation, the first document assessed in the study” (p. 15). The rationale, according to Merriam, was that “simultaneous data collection and analysis allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting data collection, and to ‘test’ emerging concepts, themes, and categories against subsequent data” (p. 15). Merriam cautioned against starting the analysis at the end of the data collection phase:

To wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data; on the other hand, to wait until the end can also be

disastrous as many qualitative researchers have found themselves facing hundreds of pages of transcripts or field notes without a clue where to begin. (p. 14)

Gall et al., (2003) also similarly advised the researcher:

Data collection is emergent in case study research in that what the researcher learns from data collection at one point in time often is used to determine subsequent data collection activities. Therefore, a case study researcher needs to spend time analyzing the data, at least informally, while data collection still is in progress. (p. 449)

In the study, the process of data collection began as soon as the researcher received the Ethics Approvals from both the University of Saskatchewan and the National Research Council of Malawi (through the University of Malawi Research Committee). Document review, semi-structured interviews and administration of the questionnaire and some data analyses were all conducted concurrently. This process allowed the researcher to direct the data collection phase into areas that produced rich data for further analysis.

The research questions were answered by using data from documents review, the interviews and responses from the questionnaire. The research data were classified in accordance with the specific area (governance, administrative, financial, personnel, academic, student affairs). Similarly, the influence of external bodies on the autonomy of UNIMA was determined by comparing the information from document reviews and interview findings.

Qualitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS), a statistics software package. Charts were produced, which, together with data from the document reviews, assisted to determine the legal and the practical decision-making positions of UNIMA in the six areas.

3.4.2 Research Questions Matrix

As discussed, the major sources of information for this study were interviews, questionnaires, and documents analysis. A research question matrix, shown in Table 3.2, shows the sources of data and the interview/survey item for each research area. The first column shows the six areas of research: government involvement in UNIMA matters, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters. The second column, *source of data*, shows the instrument that was used to gather information is the specific area, for example, an interview guide and/or a questionnaire for Government involvement in UNIMA matters. The third column, *item*, shows the particular item in the instrument, which provided the data that addressed the specific area of research. All the data collected in this study (interviews, transcripts, reports, and related documents) formed the *case study database* (Yin 1989).

3.4.3 Summary

Research data in this study were classified according to the research questions and key ideas in relation to autonomy in UNIMA. The process of analysis included the transcribing and verification of recorded interviews with the respondents for accuracy. The questionnaire data were coded and processed using the SPSS computer software programme. Some findings of the report and document reviews are reported in Chapter 4 while the rest of the findings are reported in Chapter 5.

Table 3.2***Research Question Matrix for the Nature of Institutional Autonomy in UNIMA***

Research Area	Source of Data	Item
Government Involvement	a. Interview with Govt. Officials (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA officials (<i>Approx. E</i>) c. Questionnaire (<i>Approx. G</i>)	All section Section II Section I
Administrative Matters	a. Interview with Govt Officials (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA Officials c. Interview with College Principals (<i>Appx. E</i>) d. Interview with Deans (<i>Appx. E</i>) e. Interview with HODs (<i>Appx. E</i>) f. Questionnaire (<i>Appx. G</i>)	Section VI Section VII Section II, VII Section VI Section VI Section II
Financial Matters	a. Interview with Govt. Official (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA Officials (<i>Appx. E</i>) c. Interview with College Principals (<i>Appx. E</i>) d. Interview with Deans (<i>Appx. E</i>) e. Interview with HODs (<i>Appx. E</i>) f. Questionnaire (<i>Appx. G</i>)	Section V Section VI Section VI Section V Section V Section III
Personnel Matters	a. Interview with Govt Official (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA Officials (<i>Appx. E</i>) c. Interview with College Principals (<i>Appx. E</i>) d. Interview with Deans (<i>Appx. E</i>) e. Interview with HODs (<i>Appx. E</i>) f. Questionnaire (<i>Appx. G</i>)	Section II Section III Section III Section II Section II Section IV
Academic Matters	a. Interview with Govt. Official (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA Officials (<i>Appx. E</i>) c. Interview with College Principals (<i>Appx. E</i>) d. Interview with Deans (<i>Appx. E</i>) e. Interview with HODs (<i>Appx. E</i>) f. Questionnaire (<i>Appx. G</i>)	Section III Section IV Section IV Section III Section III Section IV
Student Matters	a. Interview with Govt. Official (<i>Appx. F</i>) b. Interview with UNIMA Officials (<i>Appx. E</i>) c. Interview with College Principals (<i>Appx. E</i>) d. Interview with Deans (<i>Appx. E</i>) e. Interview with HODs (<i>Appx. E</i>) f. Questionnaire (<i>Appx. G</i>)	Section IV Section V Section V Section IV Section IV Section VI

Note: Appx. = Appendix; Govt = Government; HODs = Heads of Department. Data sources from external bodies were not included as the questions were different.

3.5 Establishing Validity and Trustworthiness

Merriam (1998) observed that “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 198). Eichelberger (1989) pointed out that “what is needed is the confidence that the data are adequate to document, at some level of probability, that the conclusions made in a study are accurate reflections of the relationships among the variables” (p. 232).

3.5.1 Validity

Langenbach et al., (1994) defined validity as “the determination of the credibility of the data being measured or understood in a research study” (p. 377). Johnson and Christensen (2000) pointed out that “when qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and, therefore defensible” (p. 207). Stake (1995) reported that the question each qualitative researcher must ask is, ‘Did I get it right?’ and pointed out that validity referred to the degree of confidence that can be placed upon the findings of a study.

In addition, there must be consistency in the data collection, analysis, and reporting. Owens (1982) subscribed to this idea by arguing that “naturalistic research is trustworthy when it is accurate or based upon well-corroborated evidence” (p. 16). Owens went on to suggest:

Validity was enhanced through the strategy of a *thick description*, and that the purpose of a thick description was to take the reader there...so as to provide a report that yield a rich sense of understanding events and of having insight as to their meaning or more likely, meanings” (p. 17).

In order to help deal with the problem of establishing validity and reliability of qualitative case study research, Yin (1994) outlined three principles of data collection: 1) using multiple sources; 2) creating a case-study data base; and 3) maintaining a chain of evidence (pp. 90–99).

3.5.2 Trustworthiness

Stake (1995) argued that since the establishment of qualitative research within the research realm, the term validity had become somewhat vague and trustworthiness had become more applicable instead and that trustworthiness referred to the overall quality of the research. Langenbach et al., (1994) defined trustworthiness as “the determination that the data are consistent, credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable” (p. 377). Lincoln and Guba (1990) approached the basic issue of trustworthiness through a series of questions:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth making account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria involved, what questions asked, what would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

Firestone (as cited in Merriam, 1998) noted that in terms of trustworthiness, the qualitative study “provided the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion *make sense*”(p. 199).

Merriam (1998) provided three criteria for trustworthiness: *internal validity*, *reliability*, and *external validity*.

3.5.2.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity “deals with the question of how one’s findings match reality” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). Mayan (2001) suggested:

To be internally valid, the conclusions of the research must be supported by the data. Internal validity is judged according to the accuracy with which a description of particular event represents the data – complete confidence that your conclusion come from the data. (p. 25)

To ensure internal validity, Merriam (2002) provided basic strategies a researcher can take:

- *Triangulation*: using multiple investigators, multiple source of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings in order to lessen the likelihood of error in results, to increase the validity, and ensure that the research results will be dependable
- *Member checks*: taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible
- *Peer review/examination*: discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations
- *Researcher's position or reflexivity*: critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation
- *Adequate engagement in data collection*: adequate time spent collecting data such that the data become “saturated”; this may involve seeking *discrepant* or *negative* cases of the phenomenon
- *Maximum variation*: Purposefully seeking variation or diversity in sample selection to allow for a greater range of application of the findings by consumers of the research
- *Audit trail*: a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study
- *Rich, thick descriptions*: providing enough description to contextualize the study such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situation matches the research context, and hence, whether findings can be transferred
- *Participatory modes*: involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings. (p. 31)

For this study, several strategies were used to ensure internal validity. For example, in triangulation, three methods were used for the collection of data, which was collected from the five constituent colleges of UNIMA. Member checks were also used as the respondents, for accuracy, verified the transcribed interviews. The three levels of

participants (at Council, University Office and College) provided variation in the findings of the study, such that the resulting data was a ‘rich and thick description.’

3.5.2.2 Reliability and Consistency

Merriam (1998) defined *reliability* as “the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated” (p. 205). In other words, whether or not the study will produce the same findings if it is repeated. Lanenbach et al., (1994) defined reliability as “an estimate of the degree to which an instrument or other observation will produce similar results time and time again” (p. 374). Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that the underlying issue of reliability was “whether or not the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (p. 278), and this was not easy in naturalistic studies.

Merriam (1998) observed that in a quantitative research design, reliability “is based on the assumption that there is a single reality, which if studied repeatedly, will give the same results” (p. 205). Since this is a misfit when applied to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested thinking about the ‘dependability’ or ‘consistency’ of results obtained from data (p. 288). Lincoln and Guba proposed that rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, they [outsiders] should concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable.

Merriam (1998) outlined some of the techniques a researcher can use to ensure the results were dependable:

- *investigator’s position*: the investigator should explain the assumptions and theory underlying the study, the rationale for selecting particular respondents and the context within which data is obtained

- *triangulation*: the researcher should use multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The rationale is that this will eliminate the error to a greater degree, thus reliability as well as internal validity can be strengthened
- *audit trail*: the investigator should document in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry, for ease of replicating the study. (pp. 206-207)

In this study, the respondents to the study were those who were involved in the management of UNIMA, at either policy, supervisory, or implementation levels. The assumption in this case was that the data collected was dependable. As was mentioned earlier, multiple sources of data in the study strengthened the reliability and internal validity of the study.

3.5.2.3 External Validity

According to Merriam (1998), “*external validity [generalizability]* is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p.207). Langenbach et al., (1994) defined generalizability as “an estimate of the degree to which results demonstrated in a research project are generalizable to the population” (p. 369). Mayan (2001) pointed out that “qualitative inquiry is the degree to which the audience or reader of the report is able to transfer the research findings to contexts outside of the study situation to other settings” (p. 26).

Survey research rests on the assumption that the results of a random sample can be generalized to the entire population that the sample is intended to represent (Gall et al., 2003). However, references to generalizability are of limited use when using the interview method or research. The aim of a single case study research is to relate and perhaps interpret events within a setting (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). Generalizability is limited to the possibility of the researcher supplying “a substantial amount of clear and

detailed information or thick description about the issue/phenomenon studies and the setting in which that issue/phenomenon was found” (Mayan, 2001, p. 26). This assists the reader to decide whether or not the findings are transferable and the degree of transferability, according to Mayan, “is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts” (p. 26).

Commenting on external validation, Eisenhart and Howe (1992) stated that the researcher must show that “the characteristics of the people, settings, and variables that define the experimental conditions are likely to matter when the treatment is applied to other targeted populations and situations” (p. 645). Merriam (1998) observed that “it is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?” The onus of concern for generalizability would then be with the reader and not the researcher. Merriam recommended that external validity could be improved by:

- Providing a rich, thick description so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgement
- Establishing the typicality category of the case
- Conducting a cross-site or cross-case analysis. (p. 211-212)

In this study, interview and documentary data were cross-checked with the respondents throughout the investigation to ensure that the accounts were true and the descriptions were accurate.

3.6 Ethical Issues

A researcher has a moral and professional duty to be ethical, even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics. Ethics is defined as “the study

of standards of conduct and moral judgement, how they are derived and applied, and, in the case of research, how these standards affect all those concerned with a particular project” (Langenbach et al., 1994, p.368). Johnson and Christensen (2000) defined research ethics as “a set of principles to guide and assist researchers in deciding which goals are most important and in reconciling conflicting values” (p. 63). As observed by Ely, Anzul, Friedman & Garner (1991), “qualitative research is value-laden and interwoven with ethical concerns” (p. 218). Ely outlined the main concerns of qualitative research as: integrity of the study, the impact on the participants and the broader social implications of the study.

Research that involves people needs to be conducted with ethical considerations to ensure that people who are involved are not injured by the conduct of the research. This is the responsibility of the researcher as Merriam (1988) suggested that “the best an individual researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualizing the problem to disseminating the findings” (p. 184).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) pointed out that two issues dominate traditional official guidelines of ethics in research with human subjects: informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm. Bogdan and Biklen suggested:

These guidelines attempted to insure that subjects [participants] enter research projects voluntarily; understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved and subjects [participants] are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive. (p. 43)

According to Christians (2000), there are codes of ethical guidelines agreed upon by professional and academic associations, and these principles are:

- *Informed consent* – Research subjects will be informed about the nature and consequences of the research in which they are voluntary participants
- *Deception* – Participants will not be intentionally misinformed about any aspect of the research
- *Privacy and confidentiality* – Participants have the right to privacy and will not be identified in the report
- *Accuracy* – Transcripts of recorded interviews will be made available to participants to ensure that they accurately reflect opinions (p. 138-140).

This study was conducted with these ethical guidelines in mind. Care was taken to ensure that respondents were appropriately informed of the purpose of the study, interviews were ethically administered, documentary data was ethically gathered, and analysis and reporting met with ethical considerations. The objectives of the research were clearly laid out and a discussion with all the interview candidates before the interview sessions was always conducted to clear any misunderstandings. The researcher always made a prior telephone appointment to schedule the interviews.

The participants in the study were informed about the nature and the consequences of the research in which they were voluntary participants. The *consent form* indicated the purpose of the study, the background of the researcher, the approximate time the study took, how anonymity was maintained and the possible benefits and risks of the research. The consent letter also included the individual's right to withdraw from the study at any one time. In terms of the participants' right to *privacy and confidentiality* and ensured *anonymity*, all the names and participant details in the quotes were replaced by interview numbers in place of real names on tapes, transcripts, analysis, and any summaries that resulted from this study. Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher always ensured confidentiality in the access to and storage of the taped interviews.

Since most educational institutions require research proposals that outline the nature of the study and the methods the researcher plans to adopt to protect the participants, an application for approval of research protocol, which contained copies of interview questions and informed consent forms, was submitted to the University of Saskatchewan, Ethics Committee (*Appendix B*). As the interviews took place in Malawi, the University of Malawi Research Committee, on behalf of the National Research Council of Malawi, also reviewed the research proposal protocol that was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University of Saskatchewan. The approvals from the two Ethics Committees (University of Saskatchewan and University of Malawi, on behalf of the National Research Council of Malawi) were granted prior to the commencement of the study (*Appendix I*).

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the method and research orientation for the study have been presented outlining the design of the research. The case study was considered the most appropriate research design because of its capacity to deal with the subjectivity of the study. Several definitions and types of case studies were outlined and according to Merriam (1988), a case study had the advantage of being particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. This study reflected these fundamental features.

A mixed-methods data collection was used and the main sources of data were semi-structured interviews supplemented by questionnaire and document reviews. Data analysis (reduction, display and verification) were done concurrently and this was followed by a discussion on the establishment of trustworthiness and consistency of the study. In keeping with ethical concerns in qualitative research and since the research was conducted in Malawi, the research proposal was submitted to the Ethics

Committees of both the University of Saskatchewan and the National Research Council of Malawi (through the University of Malawi Research Committee). The two institutions granted approval before the study was conducted.

CHAPTER 4

THE SETTING OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the setting of the study is described. It includes the structure of the University of Malawi as well as a description of the respondents to the interviews. The first part of the chapter gives a brief description of the historical background of Malawi as a nation and the cities in which the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi are located. The set-up of the other universities will also be briefly mentioned and this will be followed by a more detailed description of the University of Malawi, which is the focus of this study.

4.2 The Republic of Malawi

Malawi is a small inland country situated at the southern edge of South-East Africa. The country was known as Nyasaland until it became independent in 1964.

4.2.1 Brief History and Politics

According to the Pachai (1973), Malawi was a flourishing centre for Arab trade in the 19th century until the arrival of David Livingstone in 1859 and subsequently Scottish Presbyterian churches established missions. The trade was abolished when the country became a British protectorate in 1891. During the 1950s, pressure for independence increased when Nyasaland was joined with Northern and Southern Rhodesia to form the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The

federation broke up in 1959, and Northern Rhodesia took the name of Zambia, Southern Rhodesia became Rhodesia (and later Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland became Malawi.

In July 1958, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned to Malawi (then Nyasaland) after a long absence and assumed leadership of one of the political parties, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). In April 1961, MCP won an overwhelming victory in elections for a new legislative Council and in February 1963, the British Government gave the country self-governing status and Dr. Banda became the Prime Minister. Malawi became a fully independent member of the British Commonwealth on July 6, 1964 and two years later, it became a republic with Dr. Banda as its first President. In 1970, Dr. Banda was declared President for life of MCP and in 1971, he consolidated his power in the country and was named President for Life of Malawi (Dictionary.com, 2005).

For almost 30 years, the government of Malawi and the Malawi Congress Party were one. However, increasing domestic unrest and pressure from Malawian churches and from international community led to a referendum in which Malawians were asked to vote for a new form of government. In June, 1993, Malawians voted overwhelmingly in favour of multiparty democracy and in May, 1994, Mr. Bakili Muluzi, leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF) was elected new President. Under the 1995 constitution, the President, who is both Head of State and Head of Government, is chosen through universal direct suffrage every five years (Dictionary.com, 2005).

4.2.2 Malawi at a glance: geography and economy

Landlocked Malawi covers an area of 118,484 square kilometers. Tanzania borders it to the north, Zambia to the west and Mozambique to the east and south. It has the Great Rift Valley running through the country from north to south. In this deep

trough lies Lake Malawi, the third largest lake in Africa, covering 20 per cent of Malawi's area. The Shire River flows from the south end of the lake. This freshwater feature is 585 kilometers long and its width ranges from 16 kilometres to 80 kilometres (Malawi: Focus 2003). Figure 4.1 shows the Map of Malawi as described above. Appendix A shows the position of Malawi with respect to the rest of Africa.

Malawi, one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most densely populated countries, is divided into three regions: the north, the centre and the south. Malawi's GDP per capita is US\$596 and its economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, accounting for 38.6 per cent of the GNP. Its four most important export crops are (in order) tobacco, tea, sugar and coffee (Dictionary.com, 2005).

According to 2000 census, the population of Malawi is nearly 12 million and has an annual rate of growth of 3.2 per cent. The main ethnic groups include Chewa, Ngoni, Tumbuka and Yao. English is the official language in Malawi and Chichewa is the national language spoken by majority of Malawians. It is estimated that over half of Malawians practice Christianity and some 38 per cent belong to other faiths including Islam, Hindu, Bahai and traditional religions (Malawi: Focus 2003).

4.2.3 University Cities

There are four main cities in Malawi: Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. The cities of Blantyre and Zomba are known as the commercial city and university town, respectively and these are in the southern region of Malawi. Lilongwe, situated in the central region, is also the capital of Malawi. Mzuzu is the main city situated in the northern region. The locations of these cities are shown in Figure 4.1 and each city is briefly described in the following section.



Figure 4.1: Map of Malawi

Source: http://www.appliedlanguage.com/maps_of_the_world/map_of_malawi.shtml

4.2.3.1 City of Blantyre

Blantyre, located in the geographical centre of the south of the country, is the commercial and industrial capital of Malawi. Blantyre is a communications node with road and air links to all parts of the country as well as to the neighboring countries of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia and Tanzania. According to the 2005 census, the city had a total population of 809,000, growing at 4.1% per annum and accounting for 34.5% of the total urban population of the country. The city has a very young population, with over 60% below the age of 25 and approximately 62% of the economically active population are employed.

4.2.3.2 City of Zomba

Zomba, located at the foot of Zomba plateau in the southern region of Malawi, was the former capital of Nyasaland, and subsequently Malawi, until 1975 when Lilongwe became the new political capital. The city also remained the country's seat of parliament until 1997, when it was moved to Lilongwe. Zomba is also known as Malawi's university town as it is the home of Chancellor College, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. The central administration office of the University of Malawi, known as the *University Office*, is also located in Zomba.

4.2.3.3. City of Lilongwe

Lilongwe is the main centre for government administration in Malawi. It has two centres, the Old Town and the New City Centre, where the ministries and embassies are located. Just like Blantyre, Lilongwe has road and air links with major

centres both within and outside the country. According to the 2004 population survey, the city has a population of 1.346 million, growing at the rate of 8.7% per annum.

4.2.3.4 City of Mzuzu

Mzuzu is the main city of Malawi's northern region. Due to lack of road infrastructure, the north was not as well developed as the rest of the country. However, the situation was quite different at the time of the study. With the improvement of Malawi's roads network, a fine tarred road linked Mzuzu with Lilongwe. This development had assisted in making the city become more accessible from all parts of the country. In addition a regular air service by the national carrier, Air Malawi, was also available. According to the 2003 population survey, the population of Mzuzu was 119,592.

4.3 Universities in Malawi

From independence in 1964, the government of Malawi has had a very crucial role to play in its higher education system. The relatively favourable economic conditions of the late 1960s and 1970s enabled the government to sustain university education without much sacrifice. The student numbers were low and the demand made on the government finances was manageable. Students received monthly subsistence allowances (*Interview 16 & MIM Report, 1997*).

Established in 1965, the University of Malawi (UNIMA) was the only higher education institution until 1998. Initially, the Government strengthened and expanded UNIMA, as a conscious effort to provide university education to all qualified Malawians and as a move to develop the necessary manpower for the private and public sectors. Over the years, the number of Malawians seeking university education

exceeded the capacity of UNIMA. This led to the establishment of Mzuzu University in 1998 as a second national university in Malawi following the recommendations of the Commission for the Establishment of a University in the North (COMESUN). The establishment of a second university was aimed at meeting the technological, social and economic needs of individuals and communities in Malawi.

At the time of the study, there were two *public* universities in Malawi, the University of Malawi (UNIMA) and the Mzuzu University (MZUNI). Since the arrival of the multi-party democracy in Malawi in 1994, the country has experienced a proliferation of *private* universities. Table 4.1 shows three of the universities established since 1998: Mzuzu University (1998), African Bible College (1998) and University of Livingstonia (2003), all within the last 12 years.

There have been two main phases of university education in Malawi. First is between 1965 and 1994, during the country's one party-rule when government strictly controlled the university and the second phase (post-1994), when government started to allow UNIMA to be autonomous. As illustrated in Table 4.1, the situation at the time of the study was that there were four higher education institutions in Malawi, which awarded degrees, two public and two private institutions. University of Malawi was the only institution of higher learning that awarded the entire range of qualifications from certificates and diplomas to doctorate degrees. University of Mzuzu was expanding quickly and offered Bachelors degrees in Education and Forestry. A Masters programme in Science was introduced in 2005.

Table 4.1***Universities in Malawi***

Institution	Year Established	Awards
<i>Public</i>		
University of Malawi	1965	Certificates, Diplomas, Bachelors, Masters, PhDs.
Mzuzu University	1998	Bachelors, Masters
<i>Private</i>		
African Bible College	1998	Bachelors
University of Livingstonia	2003	Bachelors

Over the past two decades, the demands for higher education in Malawi have clearly intensified. This has been exemplified by the rise of enrolments in the public universities and a proliferation of private universities. For example, student enrolment in UNIMA increased from 3,600 in 1996 (MIM, 1997) to 5,538 in 2004 (University Records, 2005), an increase of 54 per cent in 10 years. The private universities are mostly church-affiliated institutions and at the time of the study, were in premedial stages as they had opened only some faculties and did not have big intake of students. In addition to the two private institutions mentioned in Table 4.1, two other private universities to be run by church organizations (Catholic University to be located in the southern region and a Seventh-day Adventist University to be located in the Central Region) were due to open in 2006. Since the focus of this study was on the University of Malawi, the next section described the general overview of the University of Malawi.

4.4 The University of Malawi

In this section, a description of the University of Malawi (UNIMA) is presented under several headings: brief history, rationale for its establishment, organization and structure, and description of the colleges.

4.4.1 Brief History

According to UNIMA Records, the University was founded in October 1964, after the country became independent from the British colonial rule, through the directive of the then Head of State and Government. It was established under the University of Malawi Provisional Council Act, which was later replaced by the University Act of 1974. The Act was further amended in 1998.

Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) Report (1997) observed that the University of Malawi Bill of 1964 mandated the establishment of Chancellor College at the then Robert Armitage High School, now Chichiri Secondary School, in Blantyre and the first students enrolled in October 1965. Between 1965 and 1970, four colleges were added to the University. The colleges included Bunda College of Agriculture which offered diplomas and degrees in Agriculture, the Malawi Polytechnic which offered diplomas in Engineering and Business Studies, Soche Hill College which offered diplomas in Education and Mpemba Staff Training College (later became Mpemba Institute of Public Administration) which offered diplomas in Administration and degrees in Law.

In 1973, Chancellor College, Soche Hill College and Mpemba Institute of Public Administration moved to Zomba and amalgamated into one bigger Chancellor College, which became the main campus and offered degrees in Humanities, Science, Public

Administration, Law, Social Science and Education. In 1979, the College of Nursing was established to train nurses initially up to diploma level and this college became part of the University of Malawi. In 1991, the College of Medicine was added to the list of constituent colleges of the University of Malawi (MIM report, 1997).

4.4.2 Rationale for establishing the University of Malawi

As documented by MIM Report (1997), there was need for human resource development after Malawi became independent in 1964. The University was established to produce the human resources that were required by the then new nation of Malawi for the development of the economy after the departure of the expatriates from the country. At that time, human resource requirements by government and industry were at middle management, technical and non-graduate levels and, as such, production of diploma graduates was considered adequate. Over time, higher qualifications were deemed necessary.

The functions of the University, according to the University Act of 1974 and the amended Act of 1998, were:

- To encourage the advancement and dissemination of learning and research
- To engage in such university education and research as is responsive to the needs of Malawi and the whole world
- To provide facilities for higher education, for research and for the advancement of knowledge in such branches of learning and study and for persons, whether members of the University or not, as the Council may from time to time determine
- Subject to this Act and the Statutes, to award and confer degrees and diplomas and other academic distinctions, including honorary degrees and distinctions (University Act, 1998, p. 254).

University Records indicated that unlike some universities in Anglophone Africa, the UNIMA started without any affiliation with any major universities in the industrially developed countries. However, the University has had strong links with

sister universities in Africa, Europe and North America. Both the academic and administrative structures were based on the British model, as Malawi is a former British protectorate. This was also true of the entire education structure of the country.

4.5 Governance of the University Malawi

The highest policy-making body of UNIMA is the University Council. The Council also uses a number of committees to conduct the official business of the University.

4.5.1 The University Council

According to the University Act of 1998, the governing body of the University of Malawi was the University Council. As specified in the Act:

The Council shall be the governing body of the University and shall be responsible for the management and administration of the University and of its property and revenues, and, shall exercise general control and supervision over all the affairs of the University. (University Act, 1998, p. 255)

The Act also stipulated the composition of the University Council:

- The Council shall consist of the following members:
- The Chairperson of the Council, appointed by the *State* President
- The Vice-Chancellor
- The Principals of Colleges
- The Secretary for Education or his designate representative, ex-officio
- The Secretary to the Treasury or his designate representative, ex-officio
- Two members appointed by the Chancellor
- Four members appointed by the Senate from among its members
- One member elected by the University of Malawi Ex-students Association
- One member appointed by the Council from a panel of three persons distinguished in University affairs in Malawi, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor
- One female member and one male member elected by the University of Malawi Students Union
- Such other members, not exceeding four, as the Council may co-opt. (University Act, 1998, p. 258)

In order to transact University business, the Council was expected to meet at such times and places as was necessary. At such meetings, one-third of the members constituted a quorum and a majority vote of the members present determined the issues. The University Registrar, who was the custodian of all of the records of the University, was the Secretary to the Council (University Act, 1998, p. 259).

4.5.2 University Council Committees

UNIMA was administered through a number of committees established by the statutes. According to the Malawi Calendar 2001-2002, the list of committees included the Senate, the Appointment Committee, the Academic Planning Committee, the Academic Courses Committee, the Committee on University Teaching and Learning, the University Computer Committee, the University Library Committee, the Research and Publications Committee, the Senate Appeals Committee, the University Administrative and Academic Staff Welfare Committee, the Postgraduate Committee and the Finance Committee of University Council. The three main committees of Council were the *Senate*, the *Appointments Committee* and the *Finance and Audit Committee*.

4.5.3 Classification of the Committees

The UNIMA committees were grouped into two aspects of university interests, those serving *administrative* interests and those serving the *academic* interests. Appointments Committee and the Finance Committee were grouped on the administrative side and the committees helped look at the financial and administrative proposals before University Council's consideration. On the *academic* side, there were

committees like the Academic Courses Committee (ACC) and the Academic Planning Committee (APC), which focused mainly on academic issues.

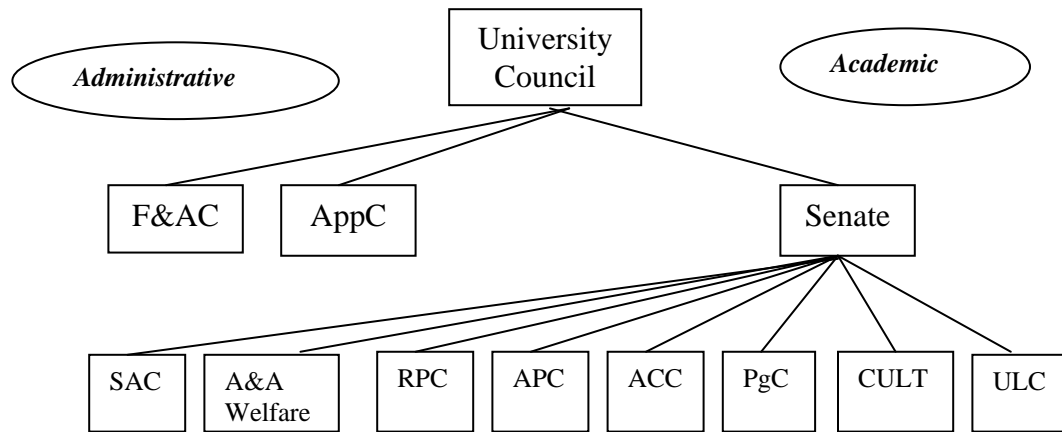


Figure 4.2: Statutory Committees of UNIMA Council.

Note: F&A = Finance and Audit Committee; AppC = Appointments Committee; SAC = Senate Appeals Committee; A&AWelfare = University Administrative and Academic Welfare Committee; RPC = Research and Publications Committee; PC = Postgraduate Committee; ACC = Academic Courses Committee; ULC = University Library Committee.

At UNIMA, the key statutory committees were the Finance and Audit Committee (F&AC), the Appointments Committee (AppC) and the Senate. These committees reported to the University Council. The rest of the committees reported to Senate. The structure of the key committees reporting to the University Council is shown in Figure 4.2, showing also the *administrative* and *academic* sides of the Council committees. The administrative and academic structure dichotomy filtered through the other structures at UNIMA. On the *administrative* side, the figure shows two committees, the Appointments and the Finance and Audit committees. The *academic* side shows the Senate and related committees. In the following section, the structure of the University is described.

4.6 Structure of the University of Malawi

The University of Malawi is composed of five constituent colleges: Chancellor College, The Polytechnic, Bunda College, Kamuzu College of Nursing, and College of Medicine. The colleges are administered from the University Central Office situated in Zomba. UNIMA institutional structure is shown in Figure 4.3.

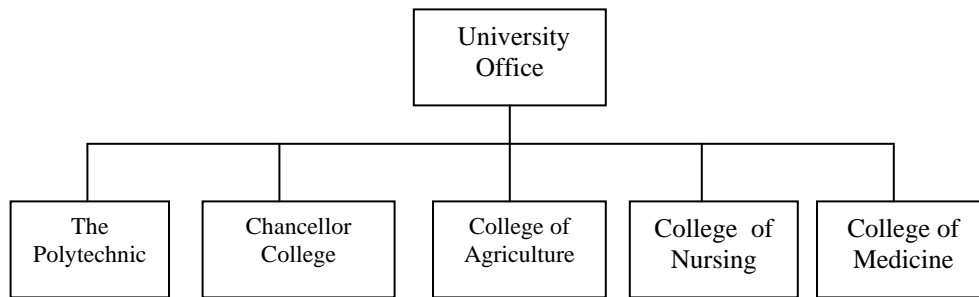


Figure 4.3: The Institutional structure of the University of Malawi

Each college is its own unit and is in direct communication with the University Office. As will be outlined later, each college is supposed to function as an autonomous institution, headed by a Principal and assisted by a Vice-Principal, Registrar and a Finance Officer. Three colleges, Chancellor College, The Polytechnic and the College of Medicine located in the southern region and the remaining two colleges: Bunda College and College of Nursing are located in the Central region of Malawi.

The current structure of UNIMA can therefore be visualized as a combination of two structures: the *university central office* and the *constituent colleges*. Brief outlines of the two structures are given below.

4.6.1 The University Office

The University central administration, called the University Office, is situated in Zomba. According to the University of Malawi Calendar (2001-2002), the officers of

the University are the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar and the University Finance Officer. Each officer plays a specific role in the administration of University of Malawi, as outlined in the University Act.

4.6.1.1 The Chancellor

According to the University Act (1998), the Chancellor is the head of the University. The Act specified:

There shall be a Chancellor of the University who shall be the head of the University. The Chancellor of the University shall be the Head of State. Subsequent to the present Chancellor, the next Chancellor shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Council. (p. 262)

With regard to the functions and duties of the Chancellor, the Act stated that the Chancellor, whenever present, would preside at all ceremonial and other congregations of the University and “shall in the name of the University confer degrees, diplomas and certificates of the University” (p. 262). Statute II of the Act on Congregation empowered the Chancellor to determine the time, place and procedure of the Congregations of the entire University. (p. 275)

4.6.1.2 The Vice-Chancellor

The University Act also specified the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor, who was subject to the approval of the Chancellor after being appointed by Council. The Act stated:

There shall be a Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malawi, who shall be the principal academic and administrative officer of the University. The Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by the Council after considering recommendations in writing on the suitability of various candidates submitted to the Council by a committee. (University Act, 1998, p. 262)

4.6.1.3 The Pro-Vice Chancellor

In the same section, the Act specified the appointment of a Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University, whose task is to “assist the Vice-Chancellor in the performance of his/her functions” (p. 263).

4.6.1.4 The University Registrar

The office of the University Registrar was also specified by the Act. It stated: The Registrar of the University shall be appointed by Council and he or she shall be the chief administrative officer of the University under the Vice-Chancellor and shall exercise such powers and perform such duties in relation to the administration of the University as are assigned to him/her by this Act, by the Statutes and by the Council, or as are delegated to him /her by the Vice-Chancellor. The Registrar shall be under the immediate supervision and control of the Vice-Chancellor. The terms and conditions of employment of the Registrar shall be determined, from time to time, by the Council (*University Act, 1998, p. 263*).

There is also a provision in the Act for the appointment of a Deputy University Registrar to assist the University Registrar.

4.6.1.5 The University Finance Officer

The Finance Officer was appointed by Council and was “the principal fiscal officer and treasurer of the University and shall be responsible to the [University] Registrar for the keeping of all the University accounts and such inventories as the Council may determine” (*University Act, 1998, p. 278*).

Closely connected with the finances of the University was an Auditor.

According to the University Act, “the auditor or auditors to the University shall be appointed by the Council among persons or firms practicing as public accountants in Malawi” (University Act, 1998, p. 280). The Act excluded appointment as an auditor any serving member of the Senate or Council. Lastly, auditors were appointed for one year and were eligible for re-appointment (p. 280)

4.6.1.6 Summary

In this section, the main administrative office of the University, the University Office, was described. The office was headed by the Vice Chancellor, who was assisted by the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar and the University Finance Officer. As the federal structure of the University comprised five constituent colleges, each college is briefly described below.

4.6.2 The Constituent Colleges of the University of Malawi

Subsection (2) of the University of Malawi Act (1998) stated that “there is hereby established a University by the name and style of University of Malawi” (p. 253). Subject to this section, the Act specified:

There shall be within the University such Colleges as the Council may, after consultation with the Senate and with the approval of the Minister, establish. The Colleges within the University shall be:

- Bunda College of Agriculture
- Chancellor College
- The Polytechnic
- Kamuzu College of Nursing and
- College of Medicine. (p. 265)

The Act also pointed out that *Council* would supervise the general administration of the Colleges while the general academic supervision would be the role of the *Senate*. This led to the establishment of the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi.

4.6.2.1 The College structure

According to the University Act, the structure of each of the constituent Colleges was similar. The officers mandated to administer the colleges were the Principal, Vice-Principal, College Registrar, College Finance Officer, the Deans and the Heads of Department. Each of these officers has specific roles in the administration of the colleges.

4.6.2.1.1 The Principal

According to the Act, a Principal, who was appointed by Council, heads each College. The Act specified that “the Principal of each College shall be responsible to each Vice-Chancellor for maintaining and promoting the efficiency and good order of the College of which he/she is Principal” (University Act, 1998, p. 278). Further, “Council shall, on the recommendation of a Principal of a College, appoint a Vice-Principal of a College...” (p. 265), to assist with College administration.

4.6.2.1.2 Deans of Faculty

It is the responsibility of Council, through Senate, to assign a Faculty and School at each College. Each Faculty and School is headed by a Dean:

Who shall be ex-officio chairperson of the Faculty or School, and who shall, under the general direction and control of the Principal of the College to which such Faculty or School is assigned, performs such functions and exercise such duties as be prescribed by the statutes” (University Act, 1998, p. 266).

According to the Statute XV, section 1, some of the duties of a Dean are:

- to consider and make recommendations to the Senate upon all matters relating to all teaching and research in the subjects of the Faculty or School including curricula and examinations
- to consider and make recommendations to the Senate upon all matters relating to the progress of students following schemes of study or research assigned to the Faculty or School
- to make recommendations to Senate for award of Degrees, Diplomas and other academic distinctions ...
- to submit proposals to the Senate...for academic development. (p. 284)

The Principal of the College is expected to present the Faculty or School recommendations and proposals to Senate through the Academic Planning Committee.

4.6.2.1.3 Librarian

Statute IX of the University Act (1998) specified that a College Librarian would be appointed by the Council, and would be responsible for the College Library. As specified in the Act, “..the Librarian shall discharge such duties as may be determined from time to time by the Principal... and shall perform such duties under the supervision and control of the Principal” (p. 280).

Other officers, who form the College management team, included the College Registrar and the College Finance Officer. These two offices represent the interests of the University Office at the College level. Figure 4.3 shows the organization chart of one of the constituent colleges, Chancellor College. The other four colleges had a similar structure, with corresponding faculties, research centres and units. The *administrative* and *academic* dichotomy is also reflected in the college organization chart. The Deans, Departmental Heads and Lecturers comprise the *academic* side while the Registrar, Finance Officer and Librarian form the *administration* side. Having

discussed the organization and structure of UNIMA, a brief description of each of the five constituent colleges will be outlined in the following section.

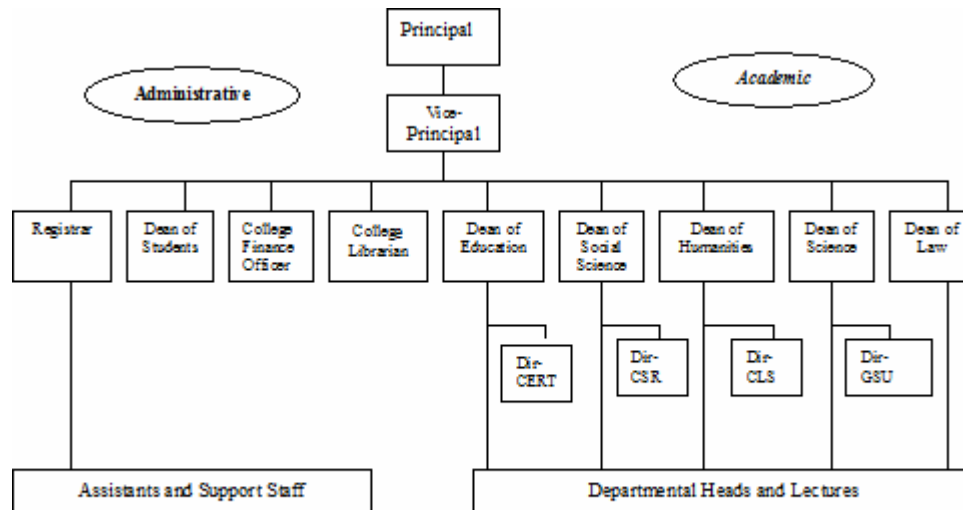


Figure 4.4. Organizational Chart of Chancellor College

Source: University Office Records, 2005

Note: Dir- = Director for; CERT = Centre for Education Research and Training; CSR = Centre for Social Research; CLS = Centre for Language Studies; GSU = Gender Studies Unit.

4.6.2.2 Description of Constituent Colleges

In this section, the general overview of the constituent Colleges in terms of academic courses, their size and activities will be briefly described.

4.6.2.2.1 Chancellor College

Chancellor College is the largest constituent college of UNIMA in terms of the infrastructure development despite having slightly fewer students than the Polytechnic (University Records, 2004-5). The College has five academic faculties: Humanities, Science, Law, Social Science and Education, each headed by a Dean. Two other Deans are responsible for Student Welfare and Postgraduate Studies, respectively.

The college runs several programmes, including four-year undergraduate degree programmes leading to a Bachelors degree, one-year postgraduate programmes leading to certificate and honours degrees, full-time and part-time Masters programmes, and part-time PhD programmes (University Calendar, 2001-2002).

4.6.2.2.2 The Polytechnic

The Polytechnic is the second largest University campus (University Records, 2004-5). The College has four academic faculties: Applied Studies, Education and Media, Commerce and Engineering, each headed by a Dean. In addition, the college has two other Deans who are responsible for Student Welfare and Post-Graduate Studies, respectively.

The College runs several programmes including Bachelor's degrees in Accountancy, Business Administration, Technical Education, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Journalism, Environmental Health, Environmental Science and Technology and Architecture. In 2003, the Polytechnic introduced a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree programme. In addition to the conventional programmes, the Centre for Continuing Education offers courses in several disciplines for those who opt to take the non-university route (University Records, 2004-2005).

4.6.2.2.3 Bunda College of Agriculture

Located in Lilongwe, Bunda College of Agriculture (Bunda) is the third largest constituent college of UNIMA. The College was initially established as a centre for

training agricultural extension workers. It now offers Bachelor and Masters degrees of Science in Agriculture and Agriculture-related disciplines (*University Records, 2004-5*).

The College has three academic faculties: Agriculture, Development Studies and Environmental Studies. Like Chancellor College and the Polytechnic, Bunda College of Agriculture has also two other Deans, who are responsible for Student Welfare and Post-Graduate Studies. In addition, there are two independent research units: the Agricultural Policy Research Unit (APRU) and Agricultural Policy Training Unit (APATU). Bunda also runs a commercial farm under the supervision of a Farm Manager. The manager reports directly to the College Principal.

4.6.2.2.4 Kamuzu College of Nursing

Popularly known as KCN, the Kamuzu College of Nursing is the fourth largest constituent College at the University of Malawi (*University Records, 2004-5*). The College operates two campuses: the main campus is in Lilongwe and the other is in Blantyre. The Lilongwe campus is located next to the main referral hospital for the central region and similarly the Blantyre campus buildings are situated on Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital premises. The location of the campuses near the hospitals serves the clinical instructional needs of KCN faculty as well as students.

The College has one faculty, that of Nursing. Just like the other Colleges, KCN has also two other Deans who are responsible for Student Affairs and Post-Graduate Studies respectively. The College offers three programmes: four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, two-year post basic Bachelor of Science in Nursing and University Certificate in Midwifery.

4.6.2.2.5 The College of Medicine

The fifth constituent college of the federal set up of the University of Malawi, the College of Medicine (COM), was opened in 1991. Just like KCN, the college is located in Blantyre, close to the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, which is the main teaching hospital. The College had a number of annexes at five other hospitals spread throughout Malawi. In response to the big demand for doctors in Malawi, as well as the surrounding Southern Africa Developing Countries (SADC), the student intake into first year has increased in recent years and the College was admitting students from Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria.

The College runs five programmes: a five-year Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery degree (MBBS), Bachelor of Pharmacy, Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Technology, Masters in Public Health and Masters of Medicine. The College has one academic faculty that of Medicine headed by a Dean. However, like the other four constituent colleges, it has two other Deans, who were responsible for Student Welfare and Post-Graduate Studies

4.6.2.2 Distribution of Students in the constituent colleges

According to University Records (2005), UNIMA's five constituent colleges had a total of 15 academic faculties, comprising 432 established academic staff. The total student enrollment in the 2004/2005 academic year was nearly 5538. Table 4.2 shows the total enrollment distribution, by college, for the past six academic years, 1999 to 2004.

The enrollment at the University of Malawi in 2005 had increased over the past five years and the biggest rise (approximately 28 per cent) was in the academic year 2004/5. This was due to the introduction of the *parallel programmes* in three of the five constituent colleges: Chancellor College, Polytechnic and Bunda College.

Table 4.2

UNIMA Student Distribution for Each Constituent College: 1999- 2005

	Number of Students in Each Academic Year					
	1999/00	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5
Chancol	1448	1508	1555	1594	1710	2017
Poly	1050	1101	1238	1538	1498	2348
Bunda	509	454	592	490	634	666
KCN	231	248	278	263	336	331
COM	95	91	88	149	149	179
Total	3333	3402	3744	4127	4325	5538
% rise*		2	10	10	5	28

Note: Chancol = Chancellor College; Poly = Polytechnic; Bunda = Bunda College, KCN = Kamuzu College of Nursing, COM = College of Medicine. * % rise = total number of students for the current year as a percentage of the previous year. *Source:* University Office Records, 2005.

4.6.2.3 Summary

In this section the overview of the University of Malawi has been described. The constituent college structures are similar despite being engaged in different areas of specialization. Chancellor College mostly awarded general degrees, Polytechnic professional degrees, Bunda agricultural degrees, KCN awarded nursing qualifications

and College of Medicine awarded medical qualifications. The Colleges were headed by Principals, assisted by the Vice-Principal, Registrar, Finance Officer, the Deans and Heads of Department.

The distribution of students from 1999 to 2005 was also outlined. It was shown that the number of students in each of the colleges was increasing, especially those colleges that had introduced the parallel programmes. Despite the increase in the number of students, the infrastructures of the colleges had remained basically the same.

4.7 Internal and External Influencers on UNIMA

It can be argued that the administration of UNIMA is influenced by two groups: those who work within UNIMA (*internal*) and those who influence UNIMA from outside (*external*) influencers.

4.7.1 Internal influencers

In giving the background of UNIMA, the structure of UNIMA, which include University Council, the University Office and the constituent Colleges, has been described. Conceptually, these institutions could be viewed as forming the internal hub that run the operations of UNIMA from within the institution.

The University Council was composed of a number of personnel who were not involved in the day-to-day running of UNIMA. The membership came from government, academicians, and politicians. The University Office was represented at Council by the senior administrators; the Colleges were represented by the Principals and Senate representatives, and the students were also represented.

4.7.2 External Influencers

There were other stakeholders outside the University who influenced its operations and therefore its autonomy. Among the external players of UNIMA were the *government*, being the main source of funding; the *regulatory bodies* who stipulated minimum curricula coverage in the disciplines offered by the various faculties in the colleges, for admission to professional practice (lawyers, engineers, nurses, and medical doctors), the *political influence*, both before and after the change to multi-party system of government in 1994, and finally the likely *competition from the other universities*, which are growing in number especially since 1994. Figure 4.5 shows a conceptual overview of the structure of the internal and external players.

From the Figure 4.5, the *internal players* comprising of the Council, University Office, and the constituent Colleges, formed the hub of the operations of UNIMA. They were directly interested in the administration of the university. This team is placed in the centre. The *external players*, Government, Regulatory Bodies, Political Influence and Other Universities, influence the operations of UNIMA from the outside, and their influence is felt by the internal team. Using information from the review of UNIMA publications, each of the external players is briefly described in the following section.

4.7.2.1 Government

The University Act of 1998 specified that two government officials, the Secretary for Education or his designate representative and the Secretary to the Treasury or his designate representative, be appointed as members of Council to represent Government (p. 258). The current membership of Government representation on

Council has increased to three. The additional representative is the Secretary for Human Resources and Management, from the Office of the President and Cabinet, (OPC).

4.7.2.2 Regulatory Bodies

In order to maintain professional standards in different disciplines, a number of regulatory bodies interact with UNIMA, and these include the Law Society of Malawi, the Board of Engineers, the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi and the Medical Council of Malawi. Each regulatory body will be outlined below:

4.7.2.2.1 The Law Society of Malawi

The Society was established under the Legal Education and Legal Practitioners Act of 1965. Some of the functions of the Act are:

- to make regulations for the syllabus and curriculum of legal education in, and for attendance at a Law School or Schools in Malawi
- to establish, conduct, regulate, manage, control and supervise courses of legal education in Malawi
- to advise and make recommendations to the Minister generally on matters relating to legal education and the requisite qualifications for the admission and enrolment of legal practitioners. (*Legal Education and Legal Practitioners Act, 1997, p. 4*)

The Act specified that “no person shall practice as a legal practitioner unless he/she has been admitted to practice in accordance with the Act”(p. 5). Conditions for the admission to practice as a legal practitioner include:

- being a citizen of Malawi or has resided continuously in Malawi for a period of not less than three months immediately before the date of the filing of the petition for admission;
- has been awarded the degree of Bachelor of Laws by the University of Malawi;
- has presented himself for and passed the Malawi Law Examinations. (*Legal Education and Legal Practitioners, 1997, p. 6*)

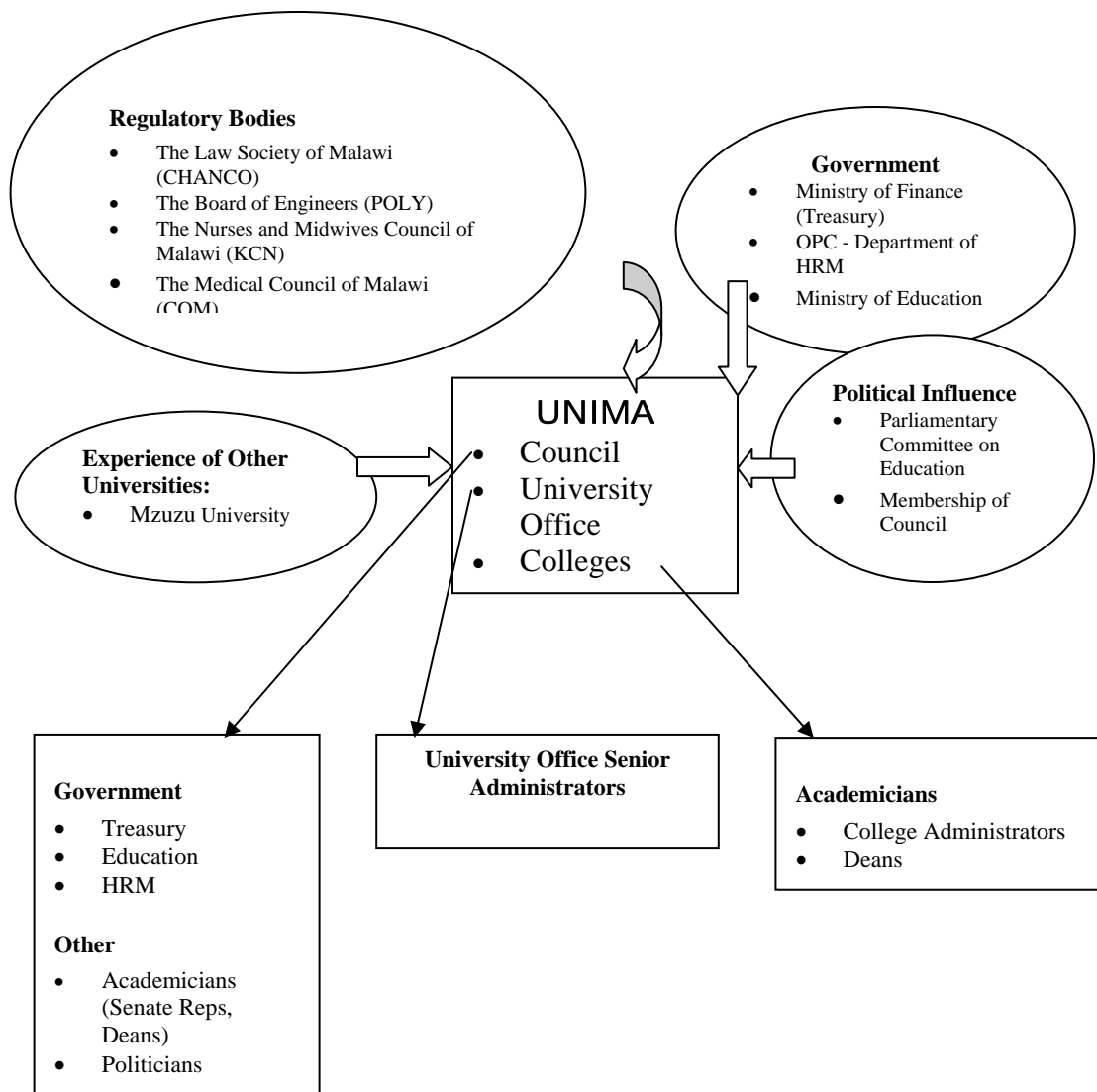


Figure 4.5: Detailed overview of internal and external sources of research data.

Note: CHANCO= Chancellor College, POLY = Polytechnic, KCN = Kamuzu College of Nursing, COM = College of Medicine, OPC = Office of President and Cabinet, HRM = Human Resources Management, HODs = Heads of Department, Reps = Representatives.

The Act empowers a disciplinary committee of the Law Society to inquire into the conduct of the legal practitioners.

4.7.2.2.2 The Board of Engineers

According to Chapter 53:03 of the Laws of Malawi, the Board is the sole qualifying and registering authority of the engineering profession in Malawi. It has powers to:

- register engineers, technician engineers and engineering technicians ;
- establish educational standards and qualifications for the engineering profession in Malawi;
- exercise disciplinary control over the engineering profession in Malawi. (*Engineers Act, 1974, p. 8*)

Section 12 of the Act specifies the objects and duties of the Board. These include:

- to maintain a register of all persons who are entitled to practice engineering in Malawi as Registered Engineers and Graduate Engineers;
- to maintain a register of all persons entitled to practice engineering in Malawi as Technician Engineers and Engineering Technicians;
- to maintain a register of selected Registered Engineers who are deemed by the Board to be qualified to supervise the post-graduate training of Graduate Engineers in Malawi, as required from time to time, by the Board;
- to approve universities, institutions, colleges or schools of engineering or other such educational institutions within or outside Malawi, as approved institutions whose training in engineering will be acceptable training;
- to prescribe, from time to time, by rules, ... syllabuses of subjects for examinations to be set and held by the Board;
- to set and hold, from time to time, qualifying examinations for admission to the engineering profession in Malawi and for registration. (*Engineers Act, 1974, pp. 9-10*)

The Act empowers a disciplinary committee of the Board of Engineers to inquire into the conduct of the Registered Engineers, Graduate Engineers, Technician Engineers and Engineering Technicians and depending on the seriousness of the matter, a registered member was reprimanded, suspended or cancelled from the register.

4.7.2.2.3 The Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi

The Council is the sole registering authority of all persons who required to be registered or licensed to perform as nurses or midwives. The functions of the Council include:

- control and exercise of authority affecting the education, training and practice of persons in, and the performance of, the practices pursued by nurses...;
- exercise of disciplinary control over the professional conduct of all persons registered under the Act and practicing in Malawi;
- promotion of liaison of the education and training, and the manner of the exercise of practices..., to promote the standards of such education and training and the manner of the exercise of such practices in Malawi. (*Nurses and Midwives Act, 1995, pp. 10-11*).

The Act also specifies the powers of the Council for the better performance of its functions. The Council has powers to:

- remove from or restore to a register, any name;
- approve nursing schools in accordance with the prescribed conditions, inspect such schools, or withdrawal or suspend approval of any such school if the education or training thereat is not, in the opinion of the Council, satisfactorily carried out... (*Nurses and Midwives Council Act, 1995, p. 12*)

One of the six committees of Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi is the Education and Examination Committee. Its functions include:

- advising the Council on matters related to education and training requirements of nursing and related personnel in Malawi;
- satisfying itself and the Council that the curricula in every teaching institution in Malawi in the nursing field are such that graduates will have a sufficient basic knowledge, skills and attitudes for the practice of their profession or calling. (*Nurses and Midwives Council Act, 1995, pp. 25*)

The Act also empowers a disciplinary committee of the Nurses and Midwives Council to investigate any person who violates or engages in any improper or disgraceful conduct to the profession and depending on the seriousness of the matter, a member is

warned, suspended, membership revoked, or refused to renew any registration or licence.

4.7.2.2.4 The Medical Council of Malawi

The Medical Council is the sole registering authority of all persons required to be registered under the Act. Its functions include:

- control and exercise of authority affecting the training of persons in, and the performance of the practices pursued in connection with, the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of physical or mental defects, illnesses or deficiencies in human beings;
- exercise of disciplinary control over the professional conduct of all persons registered under this Act and practicing in Malawi;
- promotion of liaison in the field of medical training both in Malawi and elsewhere, and to promote the standards of such training in Malawi...
(*Medical Practitioners and Dentist Act, 1987, pp. 7-8*)

The Act also specifies the powers of the Council for the better performance of its functions and the powers include:

- to remove any name from any register or, subject to such conditions as the Council may impose, restore it thereto;
- to approve of institutions in Malawi for the training of medical and related personnel;
- upon application by any person, to recognize any qualifications held by that person (whether such qualifications have been obtained in Malawi or elsewhere) as being equal, either wholly or in part, to any prescribed qualifications, whereupon such person shall, to the extent to which the qualifications have been so recognized, be deemed to hold such prescribed qualifications. (*Medical Practitioners and Dentists Act, 1987, p. 8*)

According to the Act, the role of Medical Council is to approve training institutions, promote standards of training of medical persons and monitor the professional conduct of the registered personnel. It is also responsible for recognizing the equivalence of qualifications, for accreditation purposes.

Part X, Section 41 of the Act mandates the Council to establish an Education and Training Committee, whose functions are:

- to advise the Council on all matters relating to the education and training requirements of medical and related personnel in Malawi;
- to satisfy itself and the Council that the curricula in every teaching profession in Malawi in the medical field are such that graduates will have sufficient basic knowledge for the practice of their profession or calling. (*Medical Practitioners and Dentists Act, 1987, p. 21*)

The Act also mandates the Medical Council to have a Disciplinary Committee, to inquire into complaints of any improper or disgraceful conduct and depending on the seriousness of the offence, the Council could recommend cancellation of the registration, suspension for a specified period, imposition of conditions to practice, censure and caution.

4.7.2.3 Political appointments

A provision in the composition of the Council clears the way for political appointees to UNIMA's top policy-making body. It states:

- There shall be a Chancellor of the University who shall be the head of the University;
- The Chancellor of the University shall be the Head of State;
- Subsequent to the present Chancellor, the next Chancellor shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Council. (University Act, 1998, p. 262)

Section 11 of the University Act, under the composition of the Council mandates the Chancellor to appoint two *additional* members to Council. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this provision resulted in political appointments, which, in turn, influenced the way UNIMA was managed.

4.7.2.4 Other Universities - MZUNI

Like UNIMA, MZUNI is a national university established by an Act of Parliament in 1997. Most of the provisions in the Mzuzu University Act are similar to those of UNIMA. Similar provisions include: the Head of State being Chancellor, the Council as the governing body of MZUNI, with similar roles as UNIMA Council. Other similarities include the senior officers of the University Office, the membership and functions of the University; the functions, powers and composition of the Council; the functions and powers of the Senate, faculties and the deanships.

4.7.2.4.1 Chancellorship

The only other university which, at the time of the study, had its infrastructure in place was the Mzuzu University. The articles in the MZUNI Act on the appointment of Chancellor, though, were worded slightly differently:

- There shall be a Chancellor of the University who shall be the head of the University;
- The President [of the Republic of Malawi] shall, unless he declines the appointment, be the Chancellor of the University;
- Where the President declines the appointment, the Chancellor shall be appointed by the Council in consultation with the Minister [responsible for University education]. (Mzuzu University Act, 1998, p. 11)

These articles allowed for the remote possibility of a Chancellor who was not the Head of State.

4.7.2.4.2 Developments

With a student population of about 500, MZUNI will continue to expand. With a centralized administrative system where all the officers are within the one establishment, MZUNI has made remarkable progress in the eight years of existence.

The University offers programmes that lead to diplomas, bachelors and masters degrees. Future developments, which include the development of new faculties, and establishment of an Environmental Education, Research and Training Centre to focus on scientific and social studies, were to be undertaken over the next five years. However, as the current infrastructure was inadequate, the development of a new University campus, some 10 kilometres away from the present location, was in an advanced stage.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a general description of the research setting was made, starting with a brief description of Malawi and the cities in which the University of Malawi constituent colleges are situated. For almost 33 years, there was only one public university in Malawi, UNIMA. Since 1994, Malawi has experienced a proliferation of universities: one public and two private. Several more universities will soon be established.

UNIMA has a federal administrative structure, with five constituent colleges, centrally administered. The Chancellor of the University is the ceremonial head and the Vice Chancellor is the chief executive, assisted by a Pro-Vice Chancellor, University Registrar, and University Finance Officer. The five constituent colleges: Chancellor College, Polytechnic, College of Agriculture, College of Nursing and College of Medicine, each were headed by a Principal, assisted by a Vice Principal, Deans and Heads of Department. Each of the five constituent colleges specialized in specific area of expertise. Being a national university, UNIMA was fully funded by government and offered programmes leading to diploma and degrees.

The distribution of students from 1999 to 2005 was also outlined. It was shown that the number of students in each of the colleges was increasing, especially those colleges that had introduced the parallel programmes. Despite the increase in the number of students, the infrastructures of the colleges had remained basically the same. Inevitably this adversely affected the quality of programmes at UNIMA colleges.

Whilst UNIMA was run by the Council, the University Office and the College administrators, there were other external players who influenced, either directly or indirectly, the decisions of UNIMA and these included the government, regulatory bodies, the politicians and the Mzuzu University. The University was mandated by the University Act to perform in certain ways. How these mandates played out was discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the description of institutional autonomy in the University of Malawi from the perspective of the participants in the study will be presented. The definition and importance of autonomy will first be discussed. This will be followed by the examination of autonomy from the six perspectives as described in Chapter 1, namely: government involvement in UNIMA matters, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters. Finally, the influence of other stakeholders outside the university (regulatory bodies, politicians, and other universities) will be described.

5.2 Definition and Importance of Autonomy at UNIMA

Recalling the recent developments at the University of Malawi, one of the senior officials at the University Office reported:

At his inauguration ceremony as Chancellor of the University of Malawi in , the State President of Malawi declared that ‘we want the university to be autonomous, free of any political interference on the college campuses’. This is a welcome development, considering the political wrangling that has taken place on the constituent colleges of the university, which have affected, in most cases, the smooth running of the colleges and hence the autonomy of the university. (*Interview 17*)

University of Malawi had to aim for greater autonomy in all areas of its operations. In this section, both the definition of institutional autonomy and its importance to the University of Malawi, from the perspective of the respondents, have been presented.

5.2.1 Definition of Autonomy

Requested to comment on institutional autonomy, three respondents from three different locations defined autonomy from the perspective of their disciplines. One senior respondent from the University Office with an accounting background defined it as “the ability to make own decisions, finance them and live with them, without any overt interference” (*Interview 5*). Another senior administrator from one of the Colleges observed that autonomy was “to decide and implement; it shortens the turnaround time between decision and implementation time” (*Interview 7*). A Dean of Faculty and a Council member concurred in their definitions by suggesting that autonomy was “determining what the institution wants to teach without outside interference; who they want to employ, admit as a student to the various programmes, determining how much to charge for the services” (*Interviews 3 & 8*). This sample of definitions of autonomy agreed with the wish of the Chancellor when he emphasized the absence of outside influence, political or otherwise, on University campuses.

5.2.2 Importance of Autonomy

Most of the respondents alluded to the fact that institutional autonomy was important. Autonomy could be seen at several levels. At one level, it was the relationship between the university as an institution and government. The difficulty in achieving high level of autonomy of the university was that UNIMA was fully dependent on subvention from government for its budgetary requirements, and the “whoever pays the piper calls the tunes” syndrome seemed to be the order of the day.

The other level was within the university structure itself. At this level, there had been attempts to decentralize, giving some authority to the colleges. The process dragged on for years. So there were limitations even at college level on the autonomy of colleges. The colleges were independent institutions but there was a limit to that independence because of the federal structure, being controlled by a super structure, the University Council. There were regular meetings called by the University Office to which all colleges were expected to attend. In addition, there were certain issues, which needed the colleges to seek guidance from the University Office.

With reference to the importance of autonomy to an institution, one respondent pointed out the importance of autonomy at three levels: academic, administrative and financial. Commenting on autonomy at the academic level, a senior official at the University Office stated:

The first level is actually the *academic level*. Any university has got its own standards it would like to maintain and the people to determine those standards are those that are conversant with academic issues. Hence, if you give autonomy to the university, those things are done properly as there is no interference. (*Interview 24*)

This autonomy was seen to have been present at UNIMA, especially post 1994 when the multiparty system of government was introduced in Malawi.

Commenting on the importance of autonomy from administrative point of view, the respondent from the University Office stated:

The *administration* of a university is different from the way an ordinary enterprise like a factory is managed. Academicians are highly opinionated people, rightly, because they operate from a well informed position and structures that tend to be more amenable to their function are those that espouse participatory democracy, hence committee system is usually preferred as opposed to the kind of structures you find in the private sector. Committee system basically because through such committees, people are able to articulate

their opinions and influence things from a purely position of rationality. Now, that kind of culture is not what you could ordinarily obtain outside the university and if you have a government that interferes a lot, that culture is lost and it breeds frustration on academicians. So for the purpose of managerial stability, for purposes of managerial effectiveness within an academic setting-up, autonomy is the key. (*Interview 24*)

For the same reason as was stated in the previous paragraph, this type of autonomy was seen to be present at UNIMA. Committee systems were used extensively at the University, and members freely expressed their opinions without outside interference. Finally, looking at autonomy from a *financial* perspective, the respondent suggested:

One should also look at autonomy in relation to the diversification of finance or funding sources. At the moment, we are largely funded by government. If it gave us lots of autonomy, we would be able to determine realistic fees for our programmes, which we are not currently doing basically because this institution belongs to government and government would want to control how much fees should be charged. Now, if government gave us all the money that we needed, we would have no problem; because there would be no need for us to generate more funds. But what has happened over the years particularly since 1999 is that almost every year government funding to the University is reducing whilst the numbers of staff and students has increased over the years. So there is that variance. Now if Government does not allow us to find ways of generating more income, then it makes our work extremely difficult because for us to teach we need materials for teaching. At the moment we don't get all the materials we need. (*Interview 24*)

This autonomy, which can be called *financial autonomy*, was seen to be severely limited in UNIMA on the revenue side but not on the expenditure side. Most of the respondents bemoaned the need for this autonomy at UNIMA so that the University could freely undertake its activities.

From these narratives, the absence of interference, especially government, would assist UNIMA function in the way it felt would assist in meeting set standards. The academic and administrative autonomy seemed to be present at UNIMA and allowed for a committee structure to operate freely, which gave opportunity for

academicians to share ideas. However, the limits to financial autonomy made the University too dependent on government funding. Respondents felt that there was the potential to generate their own funding but government was not willing to authorize the University to implement the ideas, including the raising of realistic tuition fees.

In agreement with the sentiments expressed by most of the respondents, one senior financial administrator summarized the importance of institutional autonomy as follows:

As a university, our operations are extremely difficult because of the autonomy we are denied to determine our own fees in the way we would like them to be and the autonomy we are unable to have because of the limited funding. So in terms of funding, if we had the autonomy to determine our own fees as well as salaries, put in place policies for bonuses to those academics or administrators that have distinguished themselves, then the University of Malawi would be a better place in terms of provision of high quality programmes and so on. (*Interview 5*)

Most respondents to the study indicated that autonomy, whether academic, administrative or financial, was seen as important for an institution like UNIMA. Being in a position to reward UNIMA employees financially was seen as a necessary condition for raising the morale of the employees and ushering in better academic results. However, the current situation was that government had an indirect influence on the decisions UNIMA due to its control of the purse.

5.2.3 Summary

This section considered the definition and importance of autonomy at UNIMA from the perspective of the respondents. The common thread in the definitions of autonomy that were given by the respondents was the absence of outside authority on the operations of UNIMA. The importance of institutional autonomy was viewed from

three perspectives: the *academic* which ensured that academic issues were undertaken by the academicians themselves; the *management/administrative*, as academic institutions encouraged free exchange of ideas among academicians and that decisions were based on rationality; and thirdly *financial*, which looked at the ability to generate funds for running the institution, without being too dependent on government. According to the respondents, the task of running a university would be difficult if government interfered in any of these areas.

In the next section, the institutional autonomy of the University of Malawi from the six perspectives as described in Chapter 1: government involvement in UNIMA matters, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters, will be examined.

5.3 Government involvement in UNIMA Matters

Being a public university, it can be argued that government involvement in UNIMA matters was a normal practice. The discussion in this section will be on how government was seen by UNIMA personnel to have been involved in the appointment of Council members, the Chancellor, political appointments to serve on Council and the interaction between government and the University of Malawi. Finally, the findings derived from the responses to the questionnaire, which was administered to a sample of the interviewees, will be discussed.

The respondents indicated that government was involved in certain matters of the University. Based on some respondents' views, this involvement had some benefits, like helping UNIMA design its programmes within the larger policies government was pursuing. Being a relatively poor country, Malawi could not afford to train people,

giving them university education for its own sake. Government felt that university education had to meet specific needs of society and government had to be in the forefront to provide that direction. Government involvement also gave UNIMA an indication of how government was functioning so the University could position itself in such a way that it played a useful role in influencing policy. As a university, which needs financial assistance from global funds, good working relationship between government and UNIMA was necessary. A senior officer from one of UNIMA's constituent colleges praised this relationship when reacting to the introduction of a new department at one of the constituent colleges of the University, the College of Medicine:

Government needs a School of Pharmacy so that we can train enough pharmacists to monitor the anti-retrovirus (ARVs). So without government's support and willing endorsement, we would not be able to get private funds from other resources. This explains why UNIMA's relationship with government has to be very good as often donors would only give funds to institutions like ours when they know that the relationship is good and government supports the application for funds; so it's collaboration at its best. (*Interview 15*)

Despite these positive assertions, most respondents had different views on government involvement in the running of UNIMA. Among the areas of concern were the appointment of Council members, perceived interference by some politicians, and the interaction between the Ministry of Education (UNIMA's parent government ministry) and the University. In the following section, each of the areas is briefly discussed.

5.3.1 Appointment of Council Members

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the University Council governed UNIMA and the University Office implemented the policy decisions from the Council. The provisions in the University Act were not very clear as to how the Council members were selected.

As UNIMA was one of the statutory corporations in Malawi, its members would be selected by Government through the Department of Statutory Corporations (mandated to select board members for all statutory bodies in Malawi). The assumption was that the selection of membership on Council was guided by the University Act. The final proposed list had to be approved by the State President. Government therefore exerted its influence on who formed the membership of the policy-making body of the University.

Furthermore, in keeping with the University Act, the membership of Council was composed of a wider representation other than the university community, such as government (the ex-officio government principal secretaries), academicians (the senate representatives), general public (the politicians and alumni) and students (students' union representatives). One Council member supported the wide representation on Council but had some reservations:

Council is supposed to be composed of, apart from the senior university representatives, people from the public, either politicians who will represent communities as well as people from the various professions who are supposed to input into the running of the university. Our Council has a wide representation, at least on paper. Attendance of meetings seems to be a problem as it has declined recently, especially on the part of the professional and political appointees.

(Interview 3)

Another senior official from UNIMA's constituent colleges had similar comments, especially on the quality of some appointees to Council. While some seemed to lack commitment, others were simply incompetent:

They should be people who are competent and know what they are talking about when they sit in Council. Furthermore, in recent years, I have seen that very few of those appointed from outside are not taking serious interest in the running of the University. Some professionals will initially attend these meetings faithfully but after some time feel that their time is worth much more elsewhere than

attending to university business. So you end up with Council meetings that are not representative. (*Interview 7*)

In order to have a more vibrant Council, some respondents offered a suggestion that UNIMA should give a list of possible candidates which would be based on candidates' abilities and then request Government, through the Statutory Corporations, to endorse the names. Such a list of Councilors would serve UNIMA's interests better than being landed with a committee, which failed to deliver.

The *three* government representatives on Council were the Principal Secretaries from the Ministries of Education and Finance (Treasury), and Office of the President and Cabinet (Human Resource Management and Development). They were expected to act as government *whistle blowers* on any unacceptable Council approvals with regard to policy and professional issues, funding issues, human development issues and administrative issues, respectively. However, despite such a high-powered representation on Council, the thinking of government was that the University could not implement certain decisions approved by the Council before seeking approval from government. UNIMA was expected to write government to seek approval for the implementation of such decisions. One senior government official, interviewed at Capital Hill, defended this action:

You must understand that when we say government, what we really mean is the Cabinet. In as much as we represent government in the Council, we have powers above us who must also be given a chance to look at our thinking and what we are saying and give the final word. I do see no problem in demanding UNIMA to seek for clearance, for Council is not the final word, as its decisions still have to come to Cabinet. For example, splitting UNIMA colleges into universities, the Council can simply make a recommendation and they cannot clear it as a fact because it has far reaching implications and therefore a cabinet paper has to be raised for Cabinet's consideration if not for information only. (*ExtInterview 7*)

However, the University had a different perception to this expectation. The University's reaction was:

When Council approves, that should be final because Council is the governing body of the University with a majority of senior people from Government. It does not make sense therefore to seek for yet another approval from Government for implementation. (*Interview 5*)

In this comment, the UNIMA official was reacting to the unjustified control government had on certain actions UNIMA could take. Having been part of the vote in approving Council decisions and considering the seniority of the individuals representing government, UNIMA felt that going back to government to seek implementation approval on matters that were already debated in Council was clearly redundant.

In an effort to address the concerns from the University Office, another senior government official commented:

Council and Ministry are different. Fighting with the University in Council is a group of people and the interested parties are there. They might say we increase salaries by 30 per cent, which is very unprecedented, because we cannot increase salaries by that much. We know that not even the economy can grow by that much. In Council, you cannot agree to disagree, there is always a resolution there, a resolution which is always passed. But when it gets to Treasury, Council will be advised as to the feasibility of the proposal. (*ExtInterview 8*)

The senior government official agreed with the current practice and argued that decisions made in any statutory body were not for implementation; an approval had to be sought first from government. The official added:

The constitution says that any decision that will have a charge on the consolidated funds cannot be implemented without the consent of the Ministry of Finance. So any decision that the Council makes that will have a *charge on the consolidated funds* has to have the approval of the Ministry of Finance. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Being a member of the University Council, the Ministry of Education advised Council members on government procedures and since most of the decisions had financial

implications, government had to be ‘officially’ informed. Seeking government approval before implementation was therefore in order, in keeping with the established professional rules. This act limited the autonomy of the University Council in its financial decision making.

Since the birth of multi-party rule of government in 1994, Council had experienced increased autonomy in its decision-making process. Council members were free to discuss freely without fear of being arrested for making certain statements that would be deemed to be politically sensitive. Commenting on the debates in Council, a senior University official stated:

The quality of the debate is largely driven by rationality rather than political intimidation, to such an extent that you know sometimes we, even those of us that were hungering for this freedom, are shocked by the extreme manner in which at times it is exercised. You will recall that at no point during the despotic rule of the first president did we have student representatives on Council. But nowadays we have two students, male and female on Council. They are on equal footing with anybody else when it comes to debating the issues. So there is a very marked difference in the way we are conducting business now. (*Interview 24*)

Several respondents were unanimous in agreeing that a wide representation on Council allowed for a free exchange of ideas in the Council chamber, despite the irregular attendance of some members.

5.3.2 The appointment of the Chancellor of UNIMA

The Head of State was the Chancellor of UNIMA. While some respondents felt that this was inviting government interference in University matters, others had the opinion that such appointment was political. The University Council appointed the Chancellor, who was the ceremonial head of the University. As specified in the University Act (1998): “The Chancellor of the University shall be the Head of State.

Subsequent to the *present* Chancellor, the next Chancellor shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Council” (p. 262). The Head of State referred to in the Act was the first State President of Malawi. The next Chancellor was supposed to be appointed by the State President after consultation with the Council, suggesting that Council played a leading role in the appointment of a Chancellor.

Respondents pointed out that the founder of the University of Malawi, who was also the first Head of State, was appointed the first Chancellor of the University. He was appointed to be the first Chancellor in honor of his realized ‘dream’ of establishing a university in Malawi. He remained Chancellor of the University for the next 30 years, the period of time he was the President of Malawi. This set precedent in that Council appointed the next Head of State to be Chancellor, when he took over the State Presidency from the first Head of State. The second Head of State of Malawi remained Chancellor of UNIMA for the duration of his state presidency. At the time of the study, the University had its third Chancellor in place, who was the third State President of Malawi since its independence in 1964.

Commenting on this development, one of the Council members observed:

The University Act is so clear in that it was supposed to have been only the first Chancellor and thereafter, anybody else would have been selected as Chancellor. But Council members have interpreted that it is supposed to be the State President, although there it says...”the next Chancellor shall be appointed by the President...” You can see now, we are in the era of the third State President but the practice of making the State President also the Chancellor has remained. (*Interview 14*)

As this was an untenable situation, a number of respondents felt that time had come for a change in the status quo. Requested to comment on the direction UNIMA can take, the Council member responded:

The structure of the University can remain as it is, but we would start by saying that the Chancellor of UNIMA should not be the Head of State. Such a move would give an indication that there is now a separation between the political and the academic decision making. The issue is that as long as we have the State President as our Chancellor, it still gives that connotation that there is that political connection; you cannot do anything without political interference; in the final analysis, it is the Chancellor that has the authority to do quite a number of things, even in deciding who the VC should be. The Chancellor has a number of final decisions to make, including who he wants as a Vice Chancellor of the University. There then lies the political interference in UNIMA. (*Interview 14*)

Some respondents felt that the appointment of the Head of State to also be the Chancellor had some political connotations. Due to squeezed budgetary requirements the University was facing, the last person to be approached when in dire need for financial assistance would be the Chancellor and, being the State President, chances of a reprieve seemed higher than otherwise. A Council member commented on the dual role of Head of State and Chancellorship:

The fact that the Head of State is also the Chancellor should be an advantage to the institution, in that we wouldn't go to no lesser person but to the head himself; and therefore, the decisions that he makes should be respected. So it is a privilege to do that and also in terms of the Council, it is a privilege because apart from seeing the Head of State, we are able also to see the other ministers and so on. This is not the position in terms of university administration. They are tied to either going through their own Minister of Education, or directly to Minister of Finance for funding. But the policy comes from the President's Office, and that's where we [Councillors] are privileged. We are able to go to the Office of the President and Cabinet and explain our case. (*Interview 20*)

However, some respondents perceived the issue differently. One college senior officer offered the following comments:

This puts the Chancellor in a very difficult position because he has to have regard to the nation's interest as a whole as he sees it and has to make balanced decisions. Whereas if you have somebody representing, within a democracy, the academic for academic, then you will get a voice that is independent. (*Interview 15*)

A University Office senior officer added to these sentiments:

The Chancellor needs more interactions with the university community and as a State President, our Chancellor wouldn't have the time. In other countries, the Chancellor's job extends beyond the ceremonial engagements, for example, mobilizing the communities for fund-raising activities on behalf of the university and this would be too much for a busy President like our present Chancellor. (*Interview 3*)

While other respondents felt that having the Head of State as Chancellor seriously interfered with the decision-making autonomy of the University, respondents suggested that the last two UNIMA chancellors did not, at least, directly interfere with the running of the University. It can be argued that they may have interfered indirectly. Asked to what extent the Chancellors interfered in decision making in the University, one senior officer from the University Office stated:

He did not interfere but may be assisted in the decision making during student or staff unrest in the university. If students are on strike for whatever reason or staff are on strike due to salary dispute or a problem with someone, then the Head of State has to come in. In case of the salary disputes, he has requested the Ministry of Finance to discuss. This has certainly happened with the previous chancellor. (*Interview 17*)

These observations seemed to suggest that the University Council appointed the Head of State as Chancellor for political reasons. Despite the negative feelings that others may have had, the previous two Chancellors used the *exception principle*, coming in only when it was necessary, thus giving autonomy to the University to manage its own affairs. This may have been the reason behind the statement made by the current Chancellor at his inauguration that he wanted the University to be autonomous, free from any political interference on college campuses.

In summary, the University Act was very clear in mandating Council to make a professional decision of choosing some prominent figure other than a politician, to be

head of the University. Council failed to break with tradition and seemed to be bent on appointing the Heads of State as Chancellors. Interview data suggested that for as long as UNIMA is not financially autonomous, it may be unwise to break away from this tradition. The State President can be a silver lining in time of financial desperation. During his inauguration, the current State President was quoted as saying: “As long as I am the Chancellor of this University, no college will fail to open for lack of funds” (The Nation Newspaper, September 13, 2004). This statement clearly shows the need for financial autonomy for Council to start acting professionally.

5.2.3 Interaction between Government and UNIMA

In terms of government structure, the Ministry of Education was the parent government ministry of UNIMA. Being an institution of higher learning for the training of a high level workforce, there was need for UNIMA and government to interact at regular intervals. At the time of the study, there was no government officer attached to *tertiary* education section, yet the *basic* and *secondary* education had officers in place. The comment from one of the senior government officials stated:

We used to have the Department of Higher Education but for now, we do not have a nominal head. The functions of the department are shared between Planning and Secondary Education departments. Issues pertaining to the higher education are dealt with the Department of Planning. As a ministry, we organize tripartite meetings, strategize funding for the University, and so on. So, although there is no head of higher education, the functions are still being performed.
(ExtInterview 8)

However, there were certain University officials who bemoaned the absence of the section for higher education and questioned: “Is the government taking tertiary education seriously?” (Interview 7). As mentioned earlier, since government knew the

direction of the economy, UNIMA needed to respond by providing the right calibre of graduates to move the country forward into the 21st century.

One University Office official deplored the lack of frequent meetings between UNIMA and government:

Such meetings used to take place every three months; rightly called *tripartite meetings* because the University met with representatives from two other ministries: Education, the University's mother ministry and Finance (Treasury), the financier. In the past five years, these meetings have become less frequent and never predetermined resulting in little dialogue between University and Government. This lack of communication has strained University-Government relationship and this can have far-reaching effects on how the University is likely to be run. (*Interview 17*)

In an interview with one senior government official, the comment was that, while accepting that such tripartite meeting had not taken place for some time, there had been some positive development:

In the past, we used to have tripartite meetings, where the Government of Malawi and the University met once every year. At these meetings, UNIMA and government agreed the courses the University was to mount and how much, for how long and also what type of staff or graduates the University should produce for specific needs of government. In order for UNIMA to be able to run the agreed courses, Government was expected to fund for the necessary resources... The tripartite meetings were revived and in fact, we are going to have the next one next month. This time we have also included Mzuzu University for the first time in the tripartite meetings. (*ExtInterview 8*)

For the activities of UNIMA to remain relevant to the needs of the country, the interaction between the government and UNIMA had to be at all levels and within these levels, free exchange of ideas was to be encouraged.

5.3.4 Questionnaire Findings: Government Involvement in UNIMA Matters

Five topics were identified in the questionnaire under government involvement in UNIMA matters, namely: membership and control of the governing council of

UNIMA, membership and control of academic boards and finally control of student associations.

5.3.4.1 Legal authority of Government to intervene in UNIMA Matters

According to the University Act, legally, government could intervene only in the membership of the Council, and as was discussed earlier, this was through the Department of Statutory Corporations which nominated and approved the membership. However, the University Statutes were not clear as to the control of Council. Government did not have any legal authority to control the governing or control of academic boards and control of student associations. These boards and associations were expected to have the freedom to operate without any interference from government.

5.3.4.2 Perceived Government influence in UNIMA Matters

Data from the 24 respondents were analyzed and the results are summarized in Figure 5.1. The findings indicated that the respondents were divided as to whether or not government exerted significant influence or not on Council membership. Seventeen per cent thought government never exerted any significant influence on Council membership; another 17% thought the influence was exerted only rarely; 33% thought the influence was exerted from time to time; and, another 33% thought government often exerted significant influence. It can be generalized that a total of 66% of the respondents thought that government exerted significant influence on membership of Council either from time to time (33%) or often (33%). As the government through the Department of Statutory Corporations vetted the names of the nominated Council

members, the University had limited autonomy as to who could be appointed to its Council.

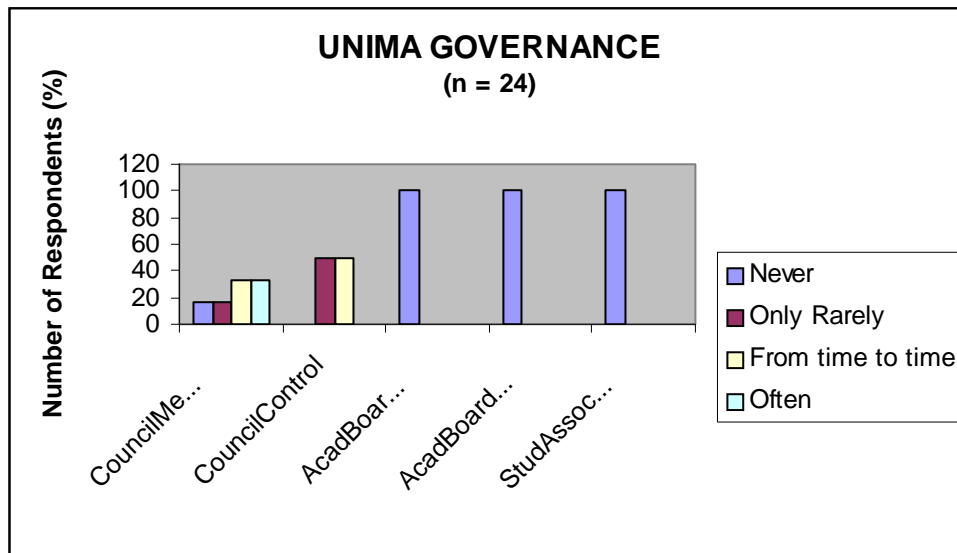


Figure 5.1: Perceived Extent of Government Influence in UNIMA Matters

With regard to *control of Council*, 50% thought government rarely controlled the Council and another 50% thought the control was from time to time. The respondents indicated that due to irregular attendance at Council meetings, government did not control the deliberations of Council, apart from expecting financial decisions passed by Council to be referred to government for clearance. As other decisions would be implemented without referring them to government, respondents felt that UNIMA had autonomy on issues other than those that had financial implications.

All the respondents to the questionnaire held the opinion that government did not exert any significant influence on *membership and control of academic boards*. Similarly, all respondents felt that government did not exert any influence on control of *student associations*. This suggested that the respondent felt that UNIMA had complete

autonomy in selecting membership and control of academic boards as well as in the control of student associations.

5.3.5 Summary

In this section, the governance at UNIMA was discussed. The respondents pointed out some government interference in some of the activities of the University. Being a public university, most respondents felt that the autonomy of UNIMA was compromised by the fact that the University was theoretically ‘owned’ by government. As a result, UNIMA was governed by the wishes of government and not according to the professional acumen of the university faculty and administrators. The ‘thin line’ between government programmes and those of the ruling political party resulted in the interference in the management of the University for political mileage. Such actions as the unilateral decision on who should serve on the University Council, the lack of government seriousness in tertiary education portrayed by the lack of representation at the ministry level and the absence of university/government meetings and the appointment of the Head of State as Chancellor supported this thesis. Despite some negative feelings on the Head of State being appointed the Chancellor of the University, respondents believed that the Chancellor did not directly interfere with the day-to-day running of the University.

The respondents to the questionnaire indicated that legally, government had the authority to intervene with the membership of the governing council of UNIMA but could not control it. Similarly, government had no legal authority to intervene in the membership and control of academic boards and the control of student associations. In terms of what happened at the University, respondents felt that government exerted

some influence on membership of Council resulting in less autonomy for Council's decision-making process. However, the respondents suggested that government did not exert any significant influence on membership and control of academic boards and student associations. This suggested that the University was seen to have a lot of autonomy in the way the academic boards and student associations operated in the constituent colleges.

5.4 Examination of Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Administrative Matters

The administration of the University was at both central office and college levels. As mentioned in Chapter 4, at the time of the study, the University operated a federal system of administration, with the central office, called the University Office, located in the city of Zomba and the constituent colleges located in three other cities of Malawi. The University Office was the centre of University administration.

In this section, the discussion on institutional autonomy on administrative matters will cover university administration, college administration, and collaboration with external institutions. Finally, questionnaire findings will be discussed to determine the extent to which government was seen to have had legal authority to intervene in administrative matters and what the perception of the respondents was in government exerting influence in administrative matters.

5.4.1 University Administration

The central administration office was headed by the Vice Chancellor. Requested to outline the structure of the University, one senior officer summarized the functions of senior officers at the University Office: the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, the Pro-

Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer and the Internal Auditor:

In this University, the Chancellor is at the top and that is more of a ceremonial position as he usually comes in during graduations to award degrees and certificates. The general day-to-day running of our University is done by the Vice Chancellor, who is responsible to the Chancellor and Council of the University of Malawi. Below the Vice Chancellor are the Pro-Vice Chancellor and the University Registrar. (*Interview 24*)

According to the senior officer, the major mandate of the Pro-Vice Chancellor was to look at the academic affairs of the University and to deputize the Vice Chancellor when he/she was away. The University Registrar, basically the Chief Administrative Officer of the University, dealt largely with managerial issues, providing managerial advice to the Vice Chancellor and Principals of the constituent colleges, who were largely of an academic background and came into management by virtue of being Principal of a college.

The management of the university finances was the responsibility of two senior officers, the University Finance Officer and the Internal Auditor. The functions of the officers were outlined as follows:

The *University Finance Officer* is like the prefect of all Finance Officers in the five constituent colleges, who is responsible for the University budget and financial accounts and funds for each year. These are consolidated in the constituent colleges and colleges submit their positions to the University Office, which are consolidated and submitted to government for funding...

The *Internal Auditor* ensures that the policies of the University are adhered to the letter, whether on the managerial side or on the financial side. To ensure that the incumbent does not get intimidated by the Vice Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor and the University Registrar, the Internal Auditor reports directly to the Finance and Audit Committee of Council, so that if he finds certain things the University Office is doing wrong and the University Office is rather adamant, the Internal Auditor can report straight to the Finance and Audit Committee. (*Interview 24*)

From this description, the roles of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer and the Internal Auditor were clarified. The officers executed their stipulated responsibilities and according to the University Office respondents, there was more autonomy in their operations, post 1994. However, due to its dependence on government funding, there was less autonomy in decisions, which had some direct financial implications.

5.4.2 College Administration

The five constituent colleges were headed by the Principals. A senior officer at the University Office outlined the structure as follows:

At College level, the Principal is at the top and is assisted by a Vice Principal. Below them is the Registrar, Finance Officer and the Deans of Faculty and heads of department are responsible for administering the departments. The Registrar's office is basically responsible for also clerical, technical and support staff, who are deployed in the offices of the Registrar and the academics. *(Interview 24)*

The administration of a college was headed by the Principal, assisted by a Vice Principal. The other administrators were the Registrar, Finance Officer, Deans and Heads of Department.

Asked to verify their roles, one Principal stated:

As the Principal of the College, I am answerable to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, and responsible for the administration of the College. I am also responsible for carrying out the chores as demanded from time to time by the University Central Administration. *(Interview 7)*

Another Principal viewed the role as that of "a Chief Executive, whose responsibilities were really to do with the development of policy and leading the College into the strategic planning through consensus and encouragement". *(Interview 15)*

Another college administrator narrated the Registrar's role as:

an overall administrator, providing the managerial and administrative guidance to the Principal of the College, the Departments and all the other sections of the college. The specific duties include coordinating recruitment and placement of staff. I also work hand-in-hand with the Finance Officer, to implement the college budget once approved. A Registrar also deals with student issues, coordinating the recruitment of students, placing them, looking after their upkeep, looking after security issues, maintenance of college property, and so on. In general, its being responsible for all support services. (*Interview 18*)

The role of a registrar was to “deal with the management of the college, resource control, recruitment of staff, discipline of staff, both senior and junior staff, registration of students and the handling the students' academic welfare”. (*Interview 19*)

The Dean of a Faculty was responsible for coordinating the academic activities of the departments in the faculty. One Dean from Bunda College explained the role:

The main responsibility is the academic affairs of the Faculty. These are the programmes that are offered at the college. For example, the Faculty of Agriculture offers a B.Sc (Agriculture), and within that B.Sc. (Agriculture) we have several specializations such as Agriculture Engineering, Crop Sciences, Animal Sciences, Nutrition and Food Science and Family Management options. So with all these options, its important that each option should have specific courses to justify it to be called an option. Then in terms of programmes, we have B. Sc. (Irrigation Engineering). This is separate from B.Sc. (Agriculture Engineering) because you are talking of hands-on programmes on the irrigation side. So we need to pack that particular programme with a lot of irrigation courses, so that when the students go out, they can practice their irrigation. (*Interview 21*)

As for the Head of Department (HOD), one incumbent described the role as:

To look after the department, teaching facilities and staff. Academically, I look at the disciplines and the curriculum within the disciplines. On the responsibilities of curriculum, the department is responsible for developing the curriculum; the curriculum is developed through interaction with professionals in the industry. (*Interview 14*)

Other Heads of Department felt that it was their role to look at the affairs of the department, specifically academic and administrative. On the academic side, heads of

department ensured recruitment of qualified personnel into the department, and that members of staff were team players, who also engaged in research and consultancies. On the administrative side, heads of department ensured that the regulations as laid down by the University of Malawi were followed by both members of staff and students. The head of department normally resolved any complaints from members of staff or students.

It was felt that Colleges had their own autonomy both in administrative and academic issues. Respondents expressed the satisfaction with the turn of events towards freedom to express themselves and act independently, especially in non-financial matters. The college administrators could make decisions without fear of any political repercussion.

5.4.3 Collaboration with External Institutions

This was an area that had been tightly controlled in the pre-1994 era. All external contacts by the University administrators had to have government clearance and endorsement. Respondents indicated that UNIMA had full autonomy in its dealing with other universities. The University acted without necessarily seeking clearance from government and in most cases, the government played a supportive role in such negotiations. Both the University and the College administrators had the mandate to handle such negotiations without government interference.

Respondents observed that agreements had been signed between UNIMA and external institutions in such areas as collaboration in research and staff exchange programmes. Some specific examples from the constituent colleges included agreements with the University of Strathclyde, UK and Washington State University,

USA (at the Polytechnic); with NORAD (at Bunda); with Galilee College of Israel through the University Office (at Chancellor College); and with John Hopkins Research Group and Welcome Trust Liverpool (at College of Medicine). However a cautious response was expressed by College senior official on the necessity of government approval:

If we are engaging a foreign body to support the college, that foreign organization might want the Government to be involved. It might be a bilateral arrangement, but still Government blessing may be necessary. I can give two examples of NORAD and JICA. These two organizations support Bunda but the contracts are signed by Government – the Treasury, even though the funding comes directly to Bunda. We write reports that have to pass through Government and hold annual meetings to appraise both the donor and Government. Government chairs such meetings. (*Interview 25*)

In this case, government came in to facilitate and not to interfere in the agreements. The University initiated the contact, meetings were held and agreements reached. It could be argued that Government had played a supervisory role in the bilateral agreement.

Respondents pointed out that there was a lot of autonomy in UNIMA deciding which institution to collaborate with, and this was dependent on the interests being pursued by the college. By its actions, government had facilitated rather than restricted the agreement.

5.4.4 Questionnaire Findings in Administrative Matters

In the area of administrative matters, *seven* topics were identified in the questionnaire, namely: (1) student numbers, (2) student numbers in particular fields, (3) closure or amalgamation of departments, (4) title of awards, (5) length of courses, (6) duration of academic year and (7) university rules and regulations. The results of the questionnaire have been reported in two sections: legal authority of government to intervene and perceived government influence in administrative matters.

5.4.4.1 Legal Authority of Government to intervene in Administrative Matters

Using the responses from the legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act, government had no legal authority to intervene in administrative matters of the university. Specifically, government had no legal authority to intervene in the number of students, the number of students in particular fields, the closure or amalgamation of departments, the title of awards, length of courses, duration of academic year and indeed in university rules and regulations. Decisions in these areas were to be left to the University administrative machinery to decide and execute.

5.4.4.1 Perceived Government influence in Administrative Matters

Data from the 25 respondents were analyzed and the results are summarized in Figure 5.2. As shown in Figure 5.2, 17% of the respondents felt that government never exerted any influence in determining *student numbers*. However, a total of 84% of the respondents felt that government exerted significant influence in determining student numbers either from time to time (67%) or often (17%). The respondents could have felt this way because government controlled student numbers indirectly through release of funds to the University.

On government exerting influence on *student numbers in specific fields*, 17% of the respondents thought that government never exerted any influence, another 17% thought the influence was exerted only rarely, and 67% of the respondents felt government exerted the influence from time to time. All the respondents agreed that government did not interfere in the *closure or amalgamation of departments*. Respondents felt that UNIMA decided on the closure or amalgamation of departments.

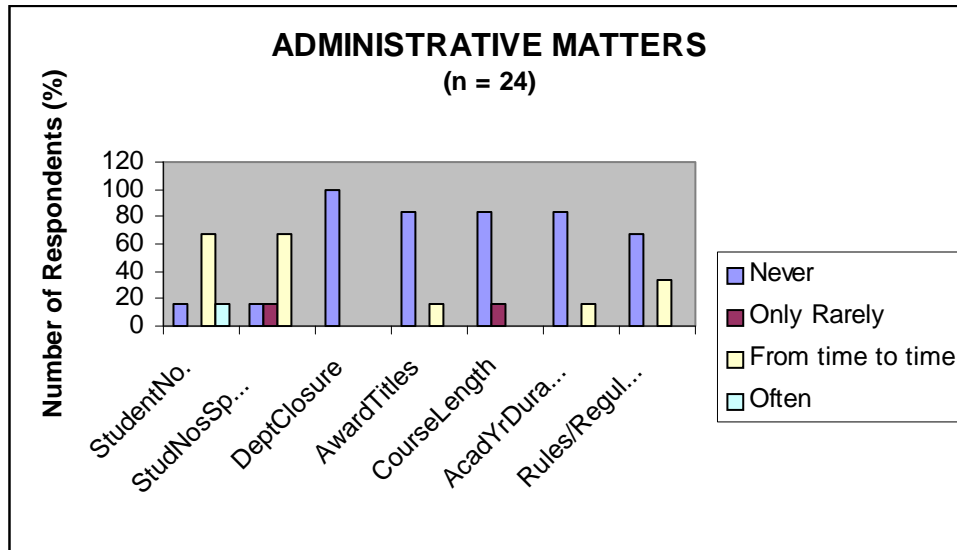


Figure 5.2: Perceived Level of Government Influence in the Administrative Matters

Even though 17% of the respondents felt that government influenced the *award of titles* from the University, the greater majority, 83%, thought that government did not interfere. This suggested that UNIMA had a lot of autonomy in deciding the titles of the awards. At the time of the study, UNIMA awarded 48 titles, broken up into certificates, diplomas and degrees. For the decision on the length of courses, the respondents felt that the University had the autonomy to decide. A total of 100% thought that government either never interfered (83%) or interfered only rarely (17%).

Finally, for the decision on the *length of courses*, the respondents felt that the University had the autonomy to decide, as a total of 100% of the respondents thought the government either never exerted any influence, 83%, or exerted influence only rarely, 17%. On the *duration of the academic year*, 83% of the respondents felt that government did not exert any influence and about 17% thought government influenced from time to time. When the data on *university rules and regulations* was analyzed, the results indicated that 76% felt government did not exert any influence, while 24%

thought that government exerted influence from time to time. In this context, the University was perceived by the respondents to have autonomy in setting the rules and regulations that govern the University.

The findings of the administration section showed that even though government had no legal authority to intervene in the administrative matters of the University, the feeling of the respondents was different. They felt that government exerted its influence indirectly, especially for those decisions that had direct financial implications. For example, student numbers were restricted by government's 'squeeze' on funding. A similar argument applied to the rest of the administrative issues, where government exerted its influence through 'ownership' of the University.

5.4.5 Summary

This section contained a discussion of institutional autonomy of UNIMA in administration matters. The University operated as a statutory corporation of government under the Ministry of Education. As a statutory body, it was expected to operate independently, under the direction of the University Council. Decisions in administrative matters were the responsibility of the University Office. However, as will be discussed in the next section, UNIMA's dependence on government funding affected some of its administrative decisions, as government exerted influence in some of the decisions through the exercise of the power of the purse.

5.5 Examination of Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Financial Matters

The previous section, the administration affairs at UNIMA was discussed. It was mentioned that UNIMA administrators had appreciable autonomy in most

administrative issues but faced an up-hill battle in financial autonomy due to reliance on government funding.

In this section, the source of UNIMA funding, which will include the budget and government subvention, will be discussed. A discussion of the raising of additional income for the University will be followed by an examination of future prospects for UNIMA funding. In the final section, questionnaire findings will be discussed, to determine if government had the legal authority to intervene in financial matters and what the perception of the respondents was in government exerting the influence in financial matters.

5.5.1 Source of UNIMA funding

Since its founding in 1965 under government decree, UNIMA has remained a public institution under the Ministry of Education. According to a senior government official:

The Government of Malawi, through Ministry of Education, has the welfare of UNIMA at heart; and that is why even in the area of funding, it is through the ministry's initiatives that UNIMA receives most of its financial support... Both national universities in Malawi are subvented by government. Government provides the money for salaries of staff, feeding students, procurement of teaching and learning materials, books, laboratory equipment etc. So it is government, which funds the national university. In addition to that, we sometimes entice a donor to provide a service to the University. Recently, we just concluded a deal where the World Bank will fund improvements at the Polytechnic, Chancellor College and Mzuzu University. These monies have come from World Bank through government. We try as much as possible to get funding, even for needy students, in the form of bursaries, grants or indeed university loans. (*ExtInterview 6*)

However, the general feeling of government was that the University was too dependent on government funding. The University was not innovative enough to find ways of

complementing the funding from government. Reacting to a complaint from UNIMA that the funding was not enough, one senior government official stated:

It is a common problem here in Malawi that people look at a budget as only from one side of the equation, the expenditure side. Nobody denies that the University is under funded, but nobody will be able to say today that we will be able to fully finance the needs of the University from the subvention. We cannot do that and there is no public university in the world where the government has fully financed their needs. There has to be something that must be done by the institutions and in this case, the University of Malawi. How should the University also come in to assist fund itself? And that is what our University does not want to put its foot down that it should also start assisting financing some of their programmes. (*ExtInterview 8*)

With this knowledge, it was felt by the respondents that UNIMA had to find innovative ways of generating extra income to supplement funding from government. The next section will discuss the subvention process from government.

5.5.2 The Budget

The funding process started with the University submitting a budget to government and requesting funding. According to documentary and interview data, budgeting at UNIMA took a bottom-up approach and the University Finance Officer coordinated the exercise in the whole University, while the College Finance Officer coordinated the exercise at the college level. Departmental requests were consolidated into a college budget and all college budgets were then consolidated into an overall UNIMA budget, which was submitted to the government for appropriation. The Ministry of Finance (Treasury) scrutinized the budget further before it was passed on to Parliament for approval.

5.5.2.1 Government Subvention

For a long time, there had been a discrepancy between UNIMA's consolidated budget figure and the amount granted by government in that UNIMA did not receive the full amount that it had requested. Table 5.1 shows UNIMA funding requests to government, the amounts granted by government and amounts generated by the university's own-activities during the period 1994 – 2004.

Table 5.1

UNIMA Funding Requested, Granted and Expenditure, (1994-2004)

	Amounts										
Academic Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Amount requested											
by UNIMA	74.9	128.8	155.0	236.8	272.7	680.0	1,158.2	1,431.5	1,689.1	2,393.2	2,977.3
Amount granted											
by Government	64.0	168.9	150.0	185.0	250.0	450.0	500.0	659.6	891.8	1,450.9	1,932.2
University-generated											
Income	6.3	118.0	131.0	26.1	22.7	39.0	58.3	169.0	201.7	303.3*	358.2*
Actual expenditure	105.3	162.0	177.2	353.1	344.5	539.0	729.0	832.2	1095.7	1,332.0	2,291.0*
Government											
funding (%)	85.4	131.1#	96.8	78.4	91.7	66.2	43.2	46.1	52.8	60.6	64.9

Note. *Estimates; # Government subvention in 1995 included the sum of MK20.9 million to clear debts. Figures in millions of Malawi Kwacha. *Source:* UNIMA Final Accounts and Budget

As seen in Table 5.1, the amounts were a composite figure of all the five constituent colleges. In the figure, the amounts granted by government and income that was generated by the University was also included. Taking Year 2000 as an illustration, the amount requested by the University was MK1,158.2 million, and government

funding was only MK500 million, representing 43% of the requested funding. From its own activities, the University generated MK58.3 million, and this reduced the amount of funding expected from government. Government funding as a percentage of the amount requested is shown on the last line in Table 5.1.

From the figures, with the exception of 1995, it can be seen that government funding to the University had always been below full subvention (100%). As shown in Figure 5.3, government funding lagged behind UNIMA funding request for the past 11 years (1994 – 2004) in not giving UNIMA full funding as requested in its budget. An exception was in Year 2 (1995) financial year when UNIMA was given a special amount, MK20.9 million, to clear its debts. As shown in Figure 5.4, government

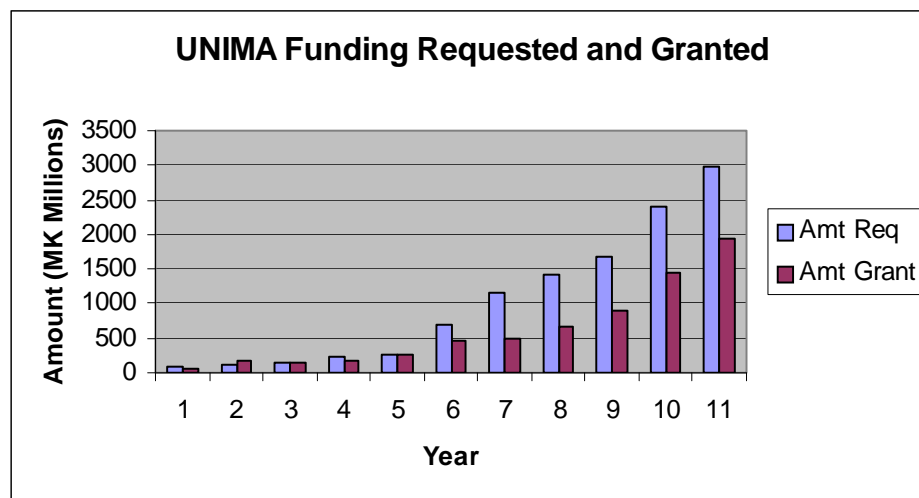


Figure 5.3: Amount of UNIMA funding requested and granted

funding to UNIMA, in percentage terms, had been decreasing between Year 2 (1995) and Year 7 (2000). From the Figure 5.3, the highest subvention in 1995 (Year 2) is reflected by the highest peak. Generally, the trend had declined up to 2000 when it

started to rise. This, as will be mentioned later, was due to the *aggressive* introduction of income-generating activities by UNIMA.

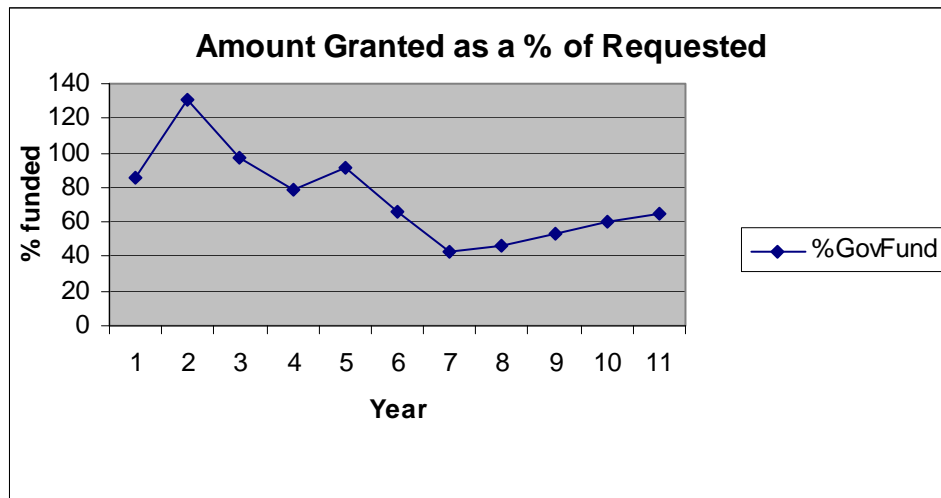


Figure 5.4: Amount of Funding Granted as a Percentage of Amount Requested.

The government's position on this development was that funding by government depended on how much would be collected. The respondents felt that since the ushering in of the multiparty democracy, there was a proliferation of organizations competing for government funding. Despite the will of government to increase the funding to the University, it was felt that the demands on government funding had become more extensive and complex. The limited funding from government had impacted directly on UNIMA as it did not get adequate funding for its planned programmes every year since 1994. One senior government official observed:

The UNIMAs constituent colleges are fully subsidized by government. In that case, the Ministry is therefore responsible that the universities must get good money to run their services. It has been extremely difficult to do this because there are so many other institutions and departments in government, especially since 1994 and each requires money from government. And because the financial portfolio is restricted, little money will be available to the institutions

and government departments. Initially, it is a small basket, and so there is a scramble to get monies there from. This is why UNIMA suffers. (*ExtInterview 16*)

Despite the government's financial position, the respondents held the opinion that there were some positive developments in the government's effort to increasing the funding to the University. A senior government official disclosed:

For the past one-and-half years, we've moved quite a lot from a subvention of MK900 million to MK2.5 billion for the University... Next year we will be funding maybe more than MK3.0 billion. It is supposed to be a medium term plan and all stakeholders, including the University itself, are supposed to work together towards that goal of increasing their income generation capacity and increasing the contribution by students. (*ExtInterview 8*)

This is reflected in Figure 5.3 by a rising trend from Year 7 (2000).

The general consensus of University administrators was that government interfered with the running of the University through the funding process. As one college administrator observed, "the underfunding can be looked at as interference by government. It may also be thought of as a political question in that somebody has to make a conscious decision whether to give the University funds or not, and that is a political interference" (*Interview 7*). Adding to the same sentiments, a senior officer at the University Office stated that "if government does not give as much money as the University wishes, then Government is directing the activities of the University, though indirectly as it [UNIMA] cannot implement certain programmes" (*Interview 5*).

5.5.2.2 The Subvention Process

Respondents from the University Office explained that, depending on the demands for government funding for any financial year, it [government] informed UNIMA at the beginning of the year how much subvention it [UNIMA] would receive

that year. This would be the amount Parliament had approved. In the past, government has given a lump-sum approval of monies for the University. The University Office then apportioned the amount among the constituent colleges proportionately, using the budget figures submitted by each college to government for funding as the basis for the apportionment.

However, in 2002, government made several funding decisions without consultation. Commenting on this development, a senior government official stated:

When the University as a family wants to share the proceeds, say MK2.5 billion, it is always total war. They do not agree as to how much to allocate to each constituent college. The basic principle is to use the cost figures for training one student in one year in each college; these are the figures we can use to budget for a college. But it is not possible with the University of Malawi. So when we discussed the need to change from giving all the money to the University Office to giving the money to individual colleges, the University Office advised us that instead of you [government] sending the MK2.5 billion to this office, this is how much you can fund each of the constituent colleges. Then in subsequent years, you see that the very same colleges are complaining as to why some colleges receive more than others. Our reaction is that the funding formula came from the University Office. We threw it back to them and asked them to agree on the apportionment. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Government insisted on this procedure in that the bickering among the constituent colleges delayed them [government] in funding the colleges to ensure the smooth running of the University. The government official stressed the need for the sharing process to be completed by a specific date before the colleges reacted:

If they cannot move, we have to. We have to move, based on the proportions they have been using themselves, because if we do not have figures from the institutions, the Ministry will not have a cash flow for the particular month. We have to do something, because if we do not fund any of the colleges by a particular date, the lecturer will stop teaching. To save the situation, we move in and tell them how we arrived at the figures, and invite them to come to us if they have any problems. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Government released the allocations monthly and directly them to each college. Dealing with the colleges directly instead of letting the University Office distribute the funds to the constituent colleges was also defended by government.

The aim was to ensure that some aspects of the MIM Report on decentralization were implemented because the University Office was seen not to be a useful broker particularly in terms of funds. Previously, when monies came to the University Office, it was the University Office which was distributing to the constituent colleges. But the constituent colleges were complaining that they were not getting the resources on time. Naturally, the University Office could not give everything they were supposed to give to the colleges because they also had some needs, which may have been of a priority to them. We then decided only to fund the constituent colleges directly, but the responsibility still remained with the University Finance Officer on how the colleges used the allotted funds. (*ExtInterview 6*)

While government's dealing with the colleges was a welcome development by the Colleges administrators, problems soon developed with the allocation of the funds to the constituent colleges. According to the University Office, the problem with government allocation was that it was not consistent with the existing sharing formula given to government resulting in some colleges being allotted more while others were allotted less than had been the practice. This caused unnecessary administrative difficulties for the University Office in trying to justify the allotments to the colleges. As an illustration, in the 2004 financial year, UNIMA was funded at 64.9% of its requested budget to run the constituent colleges. Out of this amount, government further allocated Chancellor College 53% of its submitted budget; the Polytechnic received 47%; Bunda were allocated 80%; College of Nursing got 73%; and, College of Medicine was allotted 108%, which was more than what they had requested. The allocated amounts were then released directly to the colleges on a monthly basis.

Commenting on the these developments, a senior University Office respondent stated:

What the government has done in the past two years is that out of the MK1.4 billion Parliament has approved in 2003 financial year, it decided how much each of the constituent colleges received. Last year, we intervened; this year we are also complaining. We have told government this year that once they arrive at the *global* figure, they should leave it with us [University Office] to decide who gets how much. In addition, Treasury remits monthly subventions directly to the colleges. We are complaining because this makes planning difficult for the colleges as a lump-sum would have been better. (*Interview 5*)

Respondents felt that such government unilateral decisions challenged the independence of the University and augmented the assertion that since UNIMA had no financial muscle and was fully dependent on government for funding, its autonomy to determine its actions could be controlled by government.

Another aspect of government's unilateral decision was the amount they released to the colleges at any one time. One respondent at the university level observed:

What they do is that at the beginning of each year, they tell us how much they are going to support the University for the year. After the apportionment to the colleges, the actual amounts are then paid to each college monthly. Sometimes the amount paid out varies from little this month and slightly more the other month, and so on. (*Interview 5*)

Requested to comment on this development, one government official explained:

When the overall amount has been approved, we communicate the figures to the constituent colleges. Now the colleges have to confirm their cash-flow in how much they will require per month. The monthly cash flow will fluctuate because the activities are not always the same each month. There are some months where there are no students and the college does not need a lot of money; and there are some months when the academic term is starting and more money is needed to buy a lot of learning material. This gives us a cash flow that is more realistic. All cash flows are aggregated and matched with the cash flow

on the revenue side. Where the revenue and the expenditure side of the cash flow fail to match, some institutions are asked to delay some of their activities to other months. Once the two sides are balanced, we communicate to the institutions their quarterly ceilings, stating how much will be given to the institutions for the three months, but the disbursements are on monthly basis. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Colleges reacted with mixed feelings to these funding developments. Interview data suggested that the colleges were happy that government dealt with them directly instead of going through the University Office as this facilitated in getting their funding on time. However the monthly fluctuation of the subventions was viewed with contempt as the colleges were not always sure of how much they would receive as subvention in any given month.

In its defence to the monthly subvention and fluctuations in the amount, government explained that the amount of funding government gave to UNIMA was dependent on how much it [government] had collected that month and that a monthly budget forecast was more accurate than a yearly projection. All the constituent college respondents lamented this move by government and one Principal summarized the consensus feeling of the colleges:

This is unsatisfactory because if the college is to do adequate planning, it needs to be doing it with an assured budget. The only way we can really plan for the future is to have a budget, which can be relied on, know that the money is coming as it has been passed by Parliament. It is much better to get that money as a whole because it is cost effective as prices go up throughout the year. If planning and costing are made earlier in the financial year, finance can be spent carefully and do better planning. We would like to be able to know that each month we will get so much subvention that has been promised otherwise we end up constantly crisis managing rather than forward planning. (*Interview 15*)

Respondents from the constituent colleges made two observations. First, they felt that the cash budget system made it difficult to plan for capital purchases, such as the purchase of vehicles or other large equipment from a monthly subvention. Second,

colleges were being forced to operate a cash budget system in which they had to account to Treasury the previous month's expenditure before the following month's allocation could be released to them.

A senior government official defended the cash budget by arguing that as the custodians of the government resources, just as it [government] was responsible for funding, it had also interest in looking at the outputs. Commenting on this responsibility:

Constitutionally and according to Public Finance Management Act, the Secretary to the Treasury was the custodian of government resources, who was supposed to implement the budget and reported to Parliament, although this function had been delegated to the Controlling Officers. The Secretary to Treasury had to ensure that the activities were being implemented and outputs achieved. The cash flow requirement assisted the Treasury to keep an eye on the activities in the colleges to ensure achievement of set goals.

As long as government remains the main funding agent, Treasury will have to coordinate all the activities of the government-subsidized institutions to find out if it suits in the small portfolio. If it doesn't, then Treasury has to find out where the monies will come from. So that is why there is always discussions between the Treasury and any department or institution which is funded by government, to see to it that the budget fits the pocket.*(ExtInterview 16)*

The respondents suggested that in the matters of funding, the University had little autonomy. One of the respondents summarized the lack of autonomy in funding by stating that "since our funding is dependent on what government is able to collect, sometimes Treasury has decided what to give us even before they have received the budget. This makes the whole budgeting exercise meaningless" *(Interview 5)*. The sidelining of the central office and the arbitrary distribution of allocated funds to colleges by government clearly shows government's disregard for UNIMA's financial autonomy.

5.5.3 Raising of Additional Income

There was a strong feeling from government that the University was too dependent on government and did not put in place serious machinery to generate funds in order to supplement government subvention. The implication of the University not receiving a 100% funding was that the constituent colleges could not accomplish the objectives they set solely through the government budgets. As noted previously, one government official commented:

If this University had the initiative and the innovation, it would be getting more money than it is getting now because nowhere in the world has a university survived on subvention alone and the University of Malawi is not different. (*ExtInterview 6*)

Another government official observed:

The University is indeed underfunded, but nobody will be able to say today that we will be able to fully finance the needs of the University from the subvention. There is no public university in the world where the government has fully financed their needs. There has to be something that must be done by the University to assist fund itself. Our University must put its foot down and start assisting finance some of its programmes...Financially, UNIMA is not running properly now. Starting from equipment, dormitories, acquisition of teaching materials, libraries – books and journals, etc, seriously below standard. All that comes from poor funding. (*ExtInterview 8*)

The idea of income-generation in UNIMA was not new. One senior University

Office respondent bemoaned the state of affairs:

If you look at the state of affairs, we are too dependent on government for funding. We have not been creative in looking for innovative ways of funding. I remember in the early 1990s when a Vice Chancellor recommended that the University should start investing in such ventures as building structures for renting as this would drive the university towards being self-sufficient, fellow members of staff did not support him. I clearly remember the reaction from very prominent people within the university saying, “how can a university be a business centre?” Such was the backward thinking that put us where we are now. Had we listened to the Vice Chancellor, the University would have been in a very different situation now. We would have created endowments then when

we had the funds and these endowments would have been helping us generate the needed income today. (*Interview 6*).

Considering the present financial state of the University, respondents agreed with the need to explore innovative ways to generating funds and start to slowly move away from being fully dependent on government for funding. They indicated that the lack of funds had adversely affected the operations of UNIMA, including decline in quality of education in the university, failure to maintain the crumbling infrastructure of the colleges, over-crowding in classrooms, and the brain-drain of academic staff for greener pastures. The challenge to UNIMA was, therefore, to find ways to raise extra funds and become less dependent on government for funding.

5.5.3.1 Current Sources of Extra Income

Currently, the major sources of funds for UNIMA were the financial contributions from both the normal-entry and the parallel-entry students and the research grants from donors. Other methods included offering short-term training courses, conducting research and/or consultancies in industries and government agencies and providing accommodation and catering services to private institutions in the student hostels during the long vacation. The University, through Bunda College of Agriculture, ran a commercial farm, which also contributed to the funding of the University. Bunda College had 2000 hectares of land of which 500 had been dedicated to the farm. The farm was being used as one of the instruments for income generation and, at the time of the study, the farm was going through a process of privatization and members of staff were allowed to buy shares. There was no financial support from the Alumni as is the practice in other universities.

Three of the major contributions to UNIMA income-generation were financial contribution, parallel programmes and research grants. Each of the areas will be briefly discussed below.

5.5.3.1.1 Financial Contribution

University records showed that, up to 1985, attendance at UNIMA was free and, in addition, students were paid incidental allowances to purchase books and stationery as well as to cover their incidental expenses. At that time, the cost per annum to maintain a student was approximately MK6000. Due to the squeeze on funding, UNIMA, with the support of government, introduced a cost-sharing scheme whereby each student was expected to contribute MK200 per annum towards the cost of university education and payment of student incidental allowance was withdrawn. This was viewed as a way of introducing tuition fees in phases. As confirmed by one of the University Office senior officers:

In life, things evolve. When I was a student myself at UNIMA, I was paid a monthly allowance for being a student. When that was removed, other things were introduced little by little, including financial contribution and what was expected was that the financial contribution would slowly be increased up to a point where the full recovery would be paid by the students. Unfortunately, there is politics inside it. When you just increase the figure by a little percentage, students demonstrate, the politicians too come in and so on. This is an unfortunate development. (*Interview 16*)

Over the years, the financial contribution by each student had been raised in phases, and at the time of the study, it was MK25,000. The issue of financial contribution was wrongly viewed in other circles as tuition fees. Realizing that a large number of students came from poor families, the University, in conjunction with the UNIMA, introduced the *Student Loan Scheme*. This was in line with Section 12A of the Act which provided

for the establishment of a Student Loan Scheme “which shall consist of funds out of which loans may be granted to students to enable them pay such fees” (University Act, 1998, p. 260).

The University of Malawi operated the Student Loan Scheme with funding from government. According to a government official, the Ministry of Education sourced the funds for the Loan Scheme which were then transferred to the University to be administered by giving loans to the *needy* students. Expected to operate as a revolving fund, the students who completed their university education were expected to pay back the loan so that other students, in turn, benefited from the scheme. There were different versions between government and UNIMA as to what actually happened with the operation of the scheme.

The position of government was that UNIMA awarded the loans but did not have in place a mechanism of recovering the loans from the students after they graduated, with a result that nobody paid back the loan. To maintain the scheme, government sourced other funds continuously. Commenting on this development, one senior government official commented:

We in the Ministry have always assigned money for the Student Loan Scheme... We fund them but the problem is in the implementation of the scheme. If you went into the office of the Controller of Public Service, they will give you the figures of how much we have disbursed to the University and how much we have got back from that loan for the past five years. No money has been returned from the University. (*ExtInterview 6*)

The position of the University Office on the Student Loan Scheme was different. They acknowledged the existence of the Student Loan Scheme in the University but that government did not meet its obligation in paying into the fund for disbursement to the students. One senior officer from the University Office noted:

There is the Student Loan Scheme which is administered by the Ministry of Education. We have students who applied for the Student Loan Scheme and, up to now, the Ministry has not paid for almost two years. Students' completed forms are sent to the Ministry for approved; after which they are supposed to send the money for those students to UNIMA. These students are admitted into constituent colleges on the strength of the letters they receive from the Ministry and yet that money is not coming and the students cannot be dismissed. (*Interview 5*)

One of the Deans of faculty concurred with the University Office position and explained how the loan scheme was handled at the UNIMA colleges:

There are problems with the introduction of the students loan system. Government seems to have taken the position that since the students are getting loans, the University should get subvention less the amount that would come from the student loan fund. So that at the end of the day, the funding to the University is the same because the amount of student loan money would be reduced from the approved subvention. What is happening is that almost all students sign for loans and we can't say 'no' to them, regardless. Having signed for a loan, a big chunk of the money that should fund the University is supposed to come from the loan scheme and the government is not paying up the money to finance the loans. (*Interview 11*)

As a result, students had attended university education for several years without any payment. This development sent the colleges into serious debts as they kept on hoping that government would eventually pay as promised.

Respondents suggested that there likely was some mismanagement of the scheme by either government or the University or both. The understanding from government was that only the needy students would benefit from the scheme; but the respondents revealed that anyone who opted for the student loan was granted. This was not in line with the University Act, which outlined the administration and management of the Student Loan Scheme.

According to the University Act, the University Council could appoint a committee to manage the Loan Scheme. At the time of the study, such a committee was

not in place. However, government was putting together a Trust Fund to operate the scheme. As the University had no financial muscle, it hoped that government would pay all the debts in due course and meanwhile, the University kept on carrying a load of unpaid student loan debt, which drifted it into further debt.

5.5.3.1.2 Parallel Programmes

These programmes were introduced in 2000 in order to increase the university student intake as the number of students admitted into the University was limited by bed-space. In the Parallel Programme, students found their own accommodation and paid higher financial contribution fees, MK69,000, than did the normal entry students, MK25,000. The financial contributions from the Parallel Programme did not get into the University financial system; they were under the direct control of each college administration. Commenting on the benefits of this programme to the financial position of the college, one senior college administrator stated:

The Parallel Programme is what has made us to continue to function as a college because for the past two to three years, government subvention was not adequate. The Parallel Programme has sustained us and we have managed to run the college...Because of a backlog of some of our debts, we have not been able to progress in terms of infrastructure development. We have had to use the funds from the Parallel Programme to clear the debts, which were carried forward, and we had to deal with that first. So hopefully, we shall be able to do something in future...We are trying to look at the growth of the college in terms of the infrastructure and hopefully we can use these funds. The University has to generate its own funds so that it can develop the constituent colleges on its own without necessarily having to rely on government or the donors to provide all the funding. (*ExtInterview 19*)

Most respondents felt that the colleges were benefiting financially from the introduction of the Parallel Programme. Government too was aware of this programme but did not

condone the practice of the colleges controlling the funds. A senior government official observed:

We know that the University is collecting revenues in the various Parallel Programmes run in the colleges and that those revenues are not coming into the main accounts of the University; the funds are for the departments and the colleges have never disclosed how that money is used. Ideally, that money should get into the coffers of the University to assist in running the particular departments. So as government, we do not have a comprehensive picture of the monies that the University handles. The University is only open about what they get as subvention from the central government. (*ExtInterview 8*)

The feeling of government was that the University had to be transparent on the amount of funds it generated internally since it [government], after all, funded the University. This would help government adjust its subvention to the University accordingly.

5.5.3.1.3 Research Grants

Since the funding UNIMA received from government was inadequate and that one of the mandates of the University was to engage in research for the advancement of knowledge, the need for more cash for research work was also crucial. At UNIMA, a research unit could raise money in two ways. The first was to get a share from government through the subvention to UNIMA and this was passed on to Research and Publications Committee (RPC). Since research activities were decentralized to the college level, colleges were encouraged to create a budget-line to cater for research and publication in their colleges. The second source of funding was where the colleges, led by the chairperson of RPC, wrote proposals at departmental and then faculty levels, which were then channeled to RPC for presentation to donors. Commenting on the need to channel proposals through RPC, a senior officer at the University Office stated:

RPC vet the standard of proposals that go out to the donors and the higher the standard, the better the chances of being funded. The money that will come in

will be shared in the form of project money. Usually this money does not come into the college RPC as a lump-sum but rather to the small research groups that was formed. In that case, the funding is attached to particular disciplines or a specific project. (*Interview 6*)

Individuals were also free to submit their own proposals for funding without necessarily going through the RPC and in such cases, the monies came to the individuals. Whether the monies were for a departmental research project or an individual project, the college finance office administered the funds for accountability.

Respondents reported that any researcher at a college who benefited from either UNIMA funds or research grants from donors outside the country had complete autonomy in the use of the funds that were sourced for the particular research project. Commenting on the use of funds from within the university, a senior officer at the University Office stated:

If the money has come from the college budget, the RPC will allocate the money to individuals in the various departments and there is a breakdown of how that money is going to be used. The College Finance Officer can only check that the money is being dispersed against the budgets within the breakdown. (*Interview 6*)

Commenting on the safety of funds from donors, the senior officer RPC continued:

If an individual submits a research proposal to a donor and gets funded, the research grant will go directly to the individual. However, the donor of the research grant usually requests for an official statement for accountability. In that case, the Accounts Office of the college is used to disburse the funds through vouchers. In this case, the individual has complete freedom in the use of the funds and the college only facilitates the procedure by bearing witness that the money is being used for the research. (*Interview 6*)

Whether the funds were sourced locally [within the country] or externally, from donors, the researcher had complete autonomy in the use of the funds for the intended purpose.

The involvement of the Accounts Office was a professional measure insisted upon by the donors. All research decisions were in the hands of the researcher.

In summary, respondents indicated that funds generated at UNIMA were generally at either college or departmental level. The operating funds from government that were allocated to colleges and then to departments were inadequate to run the departments. As a result, most departments supplemented government subvention. One senior college administrator respondent:

Because the subvention cannot meet most of the costs in the departments, we are trying to supplement the budget. Departments have started income generating activities and for example here at Bunda, Home Economics department has a small cafeteria, Aqua-Culture department has a small fish farm, Crop Science department is growing their own maize for sale and so on. The funds generated help the departments and as long as the departmental needs are taken care of, the college benefits indirectly. (*Interview 18*)

Respondents explained that most departments in UNIMA colleges were involved in similar income generation activities of some kind. The funds that were generated were under the control of the Head of Department (HOD), with the college administration providing the operational guidelines. The mechanism in place was that “the accounts were decentralized so that the Heads of Department were controlling officers with college administration officers as co-signatories for the cheques”. (*Interview 18*)

The departments, in consultation with the Dean of the faculty, were free to use the generated funds as long as expenditure was conducted in a transparent manner. For example, some departments had bought departmental photocopiers and while others had supplemented the low salaries of faculty and staff of the department by providing salary bonuses. “The decision as to what the money could be used for within the university

framework was left *completely* to the head of department, with the support of the college Principal. The University Office did not interfered with the use of these funds.”

(Interview 18)

5.5.4 The Way Forward for UNIMA Funding

As shown in Table 5.1, the total amount generated through the current efforts was hardly enough to make a marked difference on the University budget. A comparison between the amount that was generated by the University’s own activities and the total expenditure for the entire University for each of the Year1 to 11 (1994 to 2004) is shown in Figure 5.5.

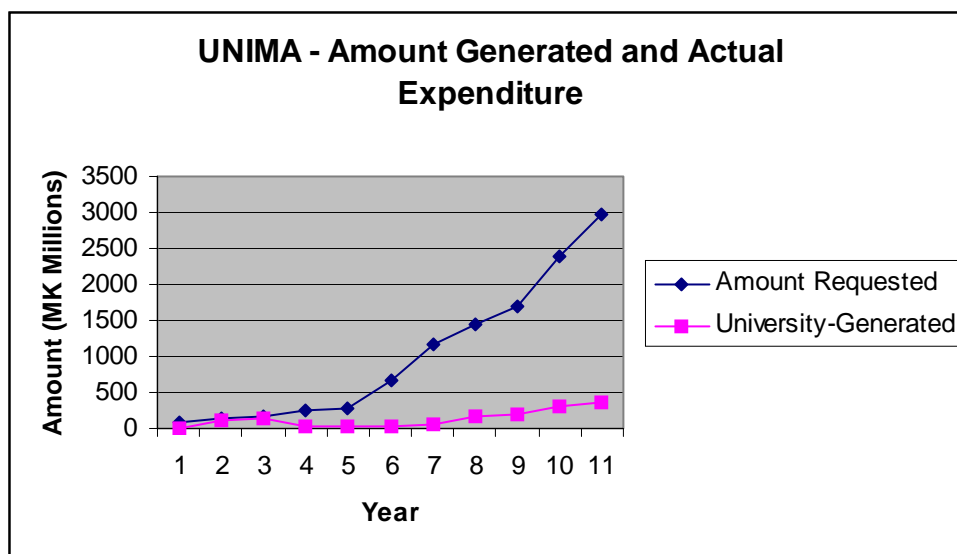


Figure 5.5: Amount Generated by UNIMA’s own activities and Actual Expenditure

The graphs show that the gap which, started widening in Year 4 (1997), had continued to widen, showing that the financial needs of the university are continuing to increase with time. In Figure 5.5, it is also shown that despite being small amounts, the amounts generated by the University were increasing, reflected by the rising trend, especially since Year 7 (2000). Respondents indicated that this was the year when the

Parallel Programmes were introduced and they generated the extra income for the University.

The challenge for the University was how to close the ever-widening gap between the actual expenditure and own-generated funds. Asked whether UNIMA could become financially autonomous, a senior officer of the University Office observed:

It will take us a long time, say 10 to 15 years from now. Some 10 years ago, we were generating only between 6% to 8% of the budget and now we have increased slightly and our contribution is between 10% to 15% of the budget. This is quite insignificant when rising prices of items are considered. Unless someone provides funding to kick-start income generating activities on a serious note, I do not expect us to become financially autonomous any sooner.
(Interview 17)

The UNIMA had several possibilities in order to raise the extra funding, and these included investing in the already existing projects and introduction of commercial tuition fees in the Colleges.

5.5.4.1 Income-Generating Projects

While UNIMA administrators agreed on the need for income generation, there was need for massive investment into the various proposed income generating projects. For example, the college farm at Bunda could be run commercially to raise funds for the college, and a motor vehicle workshop at the Polytechnic, in the commercial city of Blantyre, could also be turned into a commercial garage for motor vehicle repairs.

Commenting on the need to transform such facilities into income-generating entities for the respective colleges, a senior officer at the University Office noted:

There are chances that these and any others can be resuscitated. Some five to six years ago, when it was obvious that the University was running into a financial crisis, colleges separately requested for funding, starter-pack style of funding, to jump-start various income-generating activities in their colleges. The Polytechnic and Bunda are the notable examples. For the Polytechnic, there was an issue of motor-vehicle repair shop, where they could repair cars in Blantyre

and then the money would be used to finance various activities. There was also a question of a filling station, being built by the Polytechnic. Both of these projects have fallen by the wayside, but what was required was initial investments. For Bunda it was to revamp the farm and the amount needed at the time was about MK70 million. As it turned out, no college got the needed money and this is pathetic because without the initial jump-starting of these income generating activities, no college has the financial muscle to get into income generating activities seriously. (*Interview 17*)

There was no immediate solution to the seemingly vicious cycle of attempts at jump-starting the projects in the various colleges. The obvious source was government, which, at the time of the study, was faced with too many demands on its sources of income. The other likely assistance would come from donors, but such 'willing' donors had yet to be identified.

5.4.4.2 Tuition Fees

Government supported the need for UNIMA to introduce tuition fees for the programmes it offered in the Colleges but it expected to be consulted first. A senior government official stated:

Because government subverts the University, government must be consulted on how much the University will raise or reduce the fees. As government, we are not going to object to the raising of fees, so long as those fees are reasonable. Malawi is a poor country and there are poor students that are intelligent who cannot find fees to go to University. So University should raise fees because it is necessary to do so while at the same time cushioning the poor and the needy to be able to access university education. (*ExtInterview 6*)

The respondents felt that this was yet another example of government's exercise of a tight control on the University's financial matters. Requiring the University to charge what was, in the view of government, a 'reasonable' fee, made the University perpetually dependent on government as not enough funds would be raised to meet the rising costs.

On the question of whether or not government should give the University the mandate to raise tuition fees, Treasury thought that this was a prerogative of the University and Ministry of Education would only provide the guidelines. A senior government official from Treasury noted:

There are principles of corporate governance that we all have our different responsibilities. As much as the Treasury was responsible for finances for the Public Sector, we cannot go to the University Office and order any officer to carry out a specific task and similarly, the Ministry of Education cannot request an officer at the University Office to do a specific task including raising tuition fees. Council is composed of appointees and these will guide on policies of the University of Malawi. The University Office is the secretariat and gets advice on any decision, which touches on the national policy on education from the Secretary for Education. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Commenting on the national need for the University to be adequately financed, the Treasury official continued:

Parliament cannot just say “don’t raise school fees for the University.” We need to understand that this University is going to produce a graduate who will contribute to the economy of the country. Under-providing the University is as good as accepting that we want to have, in our economy, half-baked professionals. So as stakeholders, we have to accept the adjustment of tuition fees; it just has to be a collective responsibility and a shared understanding and vision of what we want as a nation. (*ExtInterview 8*)

Assuming UNIMA charged commercial fees, a different financial picture of the University would emerge. The introduction of the financial contributions was considered as the first step towards the introduction of tuition fees. Based on University Office records (2005), the realistic tuition fees were as shown in Table 5.2. The fees varied from college to college and depended on the academic requirements in a particular college. Respondents observed that in order to enjoy financial autonomy, UNIMA was ready to charge the realistic fees. As can be seen from Table 5.2, tuition fees per student per year ranged from MK375,000 for Chancellor College to MK1.4

million for College of Medicine. The Polytechnic had the highest number of students, followed by Chancellor College; and the College of Medicine had the least number of students. If government allowed *realistic* fees to be charged, slightly over MK 2.6 billion would be raised from a student population of 5,427.

In 2004, the University's budget requested was MK2.98 billion. The amount that would have been raised through tuition fees would have represented 89 per cent of the amount requested from government. Why the University was not introducing the 'realistic' tuition fees was still a matter for debate in UNIMA. One respondent from the University Office stated:

The University Act states that the University should determine its own fees. But in practice, the University has never determined its own fees because of political interference. Government has refused to allow the University to charge tuition fees and as a result, this has hampered its efforts to finance itself. The issue of fees is a political question and as such there is a lot of political interference. Therefore for as long as UNIMA remains a state university, this will continue to be the case that Government will be in control. (*Interview 7*)

Table 5.2

Tuition Fees Structures for UNIMA Students

College	Tuition fees per student per annum (*MK '000)	Number of students	Total fees (MK million)
Chancellor College	375	2008	753.00
Polytechnic	400	2069	827.60
Bunda College	680	739	502.52
College of Nursing	530	331	175.43
College of Medicine	1,400	280	392.00
Total		5427	2649.95

Note: *MK = Malawi Kwacha. All figures are based on 2004 figures (University Office records).

Respondents felt that government's stance not to allow UNIMA to charge economic fees was likely to make the University dependent on government for funding for a very long time. The University Office needed to move in the direction where fees will be charged, bearing in mind the negatively skewed income distribution of the Malawi population. In raising the fees, consideration was to be made of the needy students. Otherwise, the financial autonomy of the University was greatly compromised and UNIMA had no freedom to act differently from the dictates of government. The introduction of the financial contribution should be viewed as a move in this direction.

5.5.5 Questionnaire Findings: Financial Matters

In the area of financial matters, *six* topics were identified, namely: (1) financial audit, (2) university budget, (3) approval of commercial or money-making ventures, (4) approval of major capital expenditure, (5) level of tuition fees and (6) financial aid to students. The results of the questionnaire analysis have been reported in two sections: legal authority government to intervene in financial matters and perceived government influence in financial matters.

5.5.5.1 Legal Authority of Government to Intervene in Financial Matters

Using the responses from the legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act, government had the legal authority to demand financial audits, university budget, approval of major capital expenditure, level of tuition fees and financial aid to students, indicating that UNIMA had limited autonomy in these areas. However, government had no legal authority to intervene in approval of commercial or moneymaking ventures. The University had more autonomy to decide in these areas.

5.5.5.2 Perceived Government Influence in Financial Matters

Data from the 24 respondents were analyzed and the results are summarized in Figure 5.6. As shown in Figure 5.6, 33% of the respondents felt that government's influence in financial audit at UNIMA was exerted only rarely and 67% of the respondents thought government exerted the influence either from time to time (50%) or often (17%). Since government was operating a cash budget, where colleges were subvented monthly and had to submit the previous month's expenditure before being funded for the month, the respondents felt that UNIMA had no autonomy in financial audit because each constituent college had to defend the month's expenditure to government.

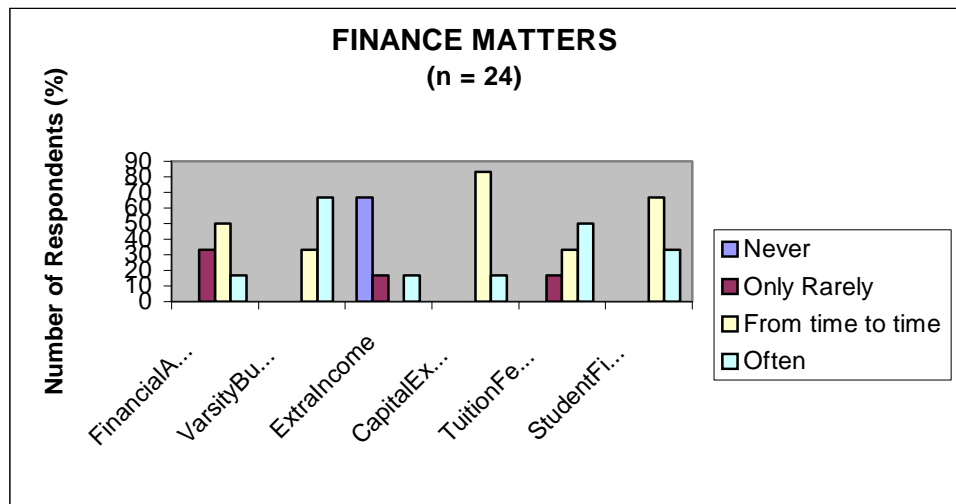


Figure 5.6: Perceived Extent of Government Influence in Financial Matters

A total of 100% thought that government influence on University budget was either from time to time (33%) or often (67%). This result suggested that most of the respondents thought government often influenced the *budgeting at UNIMA*. Being the

main source of funding to the University, respondents felt government limited UNIMA's autonomy in the way it determined its budget.

With regard to the *approval of commercial or moneymaking ventures*, the University did not seek approval of any such venture from government. The questionnaire analysis indicated that a total of 84% of the respondents thought government either did not exert any significant influence (67%) or rarely exerted influence (17%). This suggested that the University had autonomy in deciding which ventures to get involved in without necessarily getting the approval from government.

Capital expenditure was an element that was being ignored in the constituent colleges due to the shortage of cash as a result of the cash budget system of funding the colleges. The results showed that a total of 100% thought government exerted significant influence either from time to time (83%) or often (17%). This result suggested that the University had limited autonomy in deciding on its capital expenditure. This could be due to insufficient and monthly funding from government (as opposed to yearly subvention).

The general opinion about the *level of tuition fees* was that government did interfere with the level of tuition fees. The word 'government' in this case also included the politicians, especially the Members of Parliament of the political party that was in government. The Ministry of Education, which was the parent ministry, expected UNIMA to check with it on what level of tuition fees to apply. The questionnaire results indicated that a total of 83% of the respondents thought government interfered with the level of tuition fees either from time to time (33%) or often (50%). With this level of

government interference, the respondents felt that UNIMA had limited autonomy in deciding on the level of tuition fees.

The last variable in this section was financial aid to students. According to government, the *Student Loan Scheme* was introduced to assist those students who could not raise the student fees. The questionnaire results indicated that a total of 100% of the respondents thought that government exerted significant influence on the Student Loan Scheme from either time to time (67%) or often (33%). This suggested that everyone in the sample felt that government had some influence on the Student Loan Scheme. Since the funds to operate the scheme were sourced by government, it controlled the way the scheme was to be administered. It was felt that this limited the autonomy of UNIMA on the administration of the Student Loan Scheme.

5.5.6 Summary

This section contained a discussion of institutional autonomy of UNIMA in financial matters. The extent of the funding to the University in each financial year depended on how much government was able to allocate from its resources. The demands for government funding had increased after the establishment of a multi-party system of government in 1994 due to a large number of government institutions that had sprung up. The effect of this development was that less and less funding was available to the University. Government therefore encouraged UNIMA to explore innovative ways of generating extra income to supplement government efforts.

The funding to the University started with the submission of a budget to government, which was vetted and passed on to Parliament for approval. Since 1994, the budget had not been met in full. Interview data showed that government lagged

behind UNIMA funding requests and this contributed to the failure of the University to implement its planned programmes, operating instead within the limits of the squeezed budget. Thus respondents felt that UNIMA's autonomy to operate in the way it thought best was limited.

The approved budget funds from government used to be given to the University Office, who then apportioned the amounts to the constituent colleges. As a result of decentralization of some University Office functions to colleges, government took over the sharing and was dealing directly with the colleges. Government came up with its own sharing formula, which the colleges thought was unfair, as it seemed to work in favour of some colleges. Another unilateral decision by government was the introduction of a cash-budget system, which insisted on monthly financial returns to government in return for monthly subventions. This, according to the respondents, caused difficulties in capital purchases in the colleges.

The major fund-raising source for the University was the charging of commercial tuition fees but, due to both government and political unwillingness, the University did not have the autonomy to do so. Interview data revealed that the University would be able to raise MK2.6 billion in tuition fees alone, representing 89% of its funding requirements. Sources of funds that helped UNIMA run the colleges included parallel financial contribution from both normal and Parallel Programme students, research grants, short-term consultancies and training courses, a commercial farm and service provision to the community. These efforts contributed only about 12% of UNIMA's annual budgetary requirements. The hope was that government would

soften its stance and allow the University to charge the commercial fees if financial autonomy in the University was to be realized.

The respondents indicated that government had the legal authority to intervene in financially related issues, such as financial audits, the University budget, capital expenditure, tuition fee levels and student loans. The respondents concurred with the legal position and felt that the University had restricted autonomy in financial audit, the University budget, capital expenditure, tuition fee levels and student loans, but had some autonomy in the approval of commercial or moneymaking ventures.

5.6 Examination of Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Personnel Matters

This section contains an examination of the institutional autonomy with respect to personnel matters at the UNIMA. Personnel activities at the University of Malawi will be discussed at two levels, the *University Office level*, where both academic and administrative senior members of staff were recruited and *college level*, where the recruitment of the rest of the members of staff was undertaken.

Documentary review indicated that prior to 1997, UNIMA's personnel activities were centralized and the University Office controlled almost all recruitment. Since 1997, most of the personnel activities have been decentralized to colleges and the majority of staff members (academic and administrative) were recruited by college administrators. However, being a federal system of university administration, decisions made at the college level were reported to the University Office for ratification. This section pertains to the appointment and recruitment of the UNIMA administrators, the college administrators and faculty staff and the last section will deal with the promotion of UNIMA employees.

5.6.1 Appointment of University Administrators

The Chancellor of the University was the ceremonial head of the institution, who was not involved in the day-to-day running of the University. The Vice-Chancellor, who was the chief executive of the institution, ran the University with assistance from the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer and the Principals of the constituent colleges. The following section contains an overview of the recruitment process for each of the University Office personnel.

5.6.1.1 The Recruitment of the Vice Chancellor

Interview data suggested that, in the past, the Chancellor could simply appoint a Vice-Chancellor. Since 1994, the practice in UNIMA was for the University Registrar, in liaison with the Chairman of Council, to advertise the vacancy both nationally and internationally. According to the University Act, a *search committee* composed of two non-academic Councilors and six senators picked from within UNIMA, under the chairmanship of University Council, were responsible for interviewing the short-listed candidates. Following the results of the interview, the candidates were ranked in order of their performance and the Chairman of Council presented the list to the Chancellor to pick one name from the list and normally the first name on the list was confirmed. The experience narrated by a senior officer at the University Office confirmed this recruitment process:

At first, it was a nomination by the Chancellor, as it used to be the practice before 1994, directing that ‘this man should be made the Vice Chancellor.’ University officials went back to the Chancellor and informed him that Vice Chancellors in the University are recruited and not simply appointed. “We advertise, people apply, get interviewed and we will come back to you and say, ‘This is the one who has been successful for your approval’”. The Chancellor

conceded. People applied after the job was advertised, they were interviewed and the current Vice Chancellor was successful. (*Interview 5*)

The interview data in this case suggested that UNIMA had complete autonomy in the choice of a Vice Chancellor, based on qualification and not political connections. Respondents held the opinion that the use of the *search committee*, which was made up of both academics (Senators) and non-academic Councillors, testified to the independence of the recruitment process at this level. However, inasmuch as the Chancellor, who was also the State President, had the final word, the process was deemed not totally politically autonomous.

5.6.1.2 The Recruitment of Other Officers at the University Office

The task of recruiting University Office personnel was the responsibility of the Appointments Committee, which was a committee of Council. This committee was set up pursuant to Statute XVI, paragraph 1 of the University Act (1998), which stated that “there shall be an Appointments Committee” (p. 285) chaired by the Vice Chancellor. The four senior positions at the University: the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Pro-VC), the University Registrar (UR), the University Finance Officer (UFO) and the College Principals were University Office level appointments. The recruitment process for all the officers was similar.

The chairperson of the Appointments Committee for all the officers was the Vice Chancellor. The recruitment process was similar to that of the Vice Chancellor as a *search committee*, made up of academic senators and non-academic Councilors, took responsibility for the recruitment and the post was advertised both internally within the university and nationally within Malawi. But unlike the Vice Chancellor’s recruitment

process, the *search committee's* recommendations were reported to University Council and, in turn, the chairperson of Council informed the Chancellor of the new appointment. Commenting on this process and how autonomous the process was, a senior officer from the University Office observed:

UNIMA as an institution is free to appoint anybody who is qualified and meets the requirements. The litmus test is at the interview. If, during the interview, the candidate demonstrates the kind of qualities that are looked for which would make a sound academic, they get appointed. Controversial politicians have been appointed into the university as long as they satisfied the criteria. Their appointment was based on the strength of their credentials. (*Interview 24*)

Once again, the interview data indicated the absence of outside interference in the university level recruitment process of the senior officers: Pro-VC, UR, UFO and College Principals.

Government was not represented on the *search committee* but, as members of Council, the four members on Council got involved when the *search committee* reported to Council. One senior officer from government pointed out:

The offices with which we get involved in are those of the Vice Chancellor, ProVC and the University Registrar at the University Office in our capacity as members of the University Council. When the University is looking for a new Vice Chancellor for example, we get involved and we are depended upon. Our involvement is only through the University Council. (*ExtInterview7*)

This suggested that government did not have any direct influence on the appointment of these officers apart from being members of Council; otherwise the decision process was left to the search committee.

However, interview data revealed an area where Council's authority on recruitment was perceived to have been undermined by government. It concerned the recruitment by government of UNIMA faculty members to serve in various capacities in the civil service. Several examples were cited where government, without the

knowledge of Council, had approached the university staff directly and made arrangements for them to move from UNIMA and serve in different capacities in government either within the country or in Foreign Service. One member of Council reported the now ‘usual’ practice by government:

We want so and so to come and serve in government or on appointment as high commissioner or ambassador.’ This is usually after all the negotiations with the individual had been finalized. Government has always done this above Council and yet it [government] is expecting us [Council] to endorse the appointment. (Interview 20)

Council deemed this as government interference in the running of the University and they reacted by insisting that government formalize the practice with a signed contract between the two institutions. The reason behind this insistence was that the incumbents would inevitably be on *leave of absence* from the University and would need to return to their positions at the end of their tours of duty in government. Several respondents observed that such interventions by Council, which would not have been possible before 1994, assisted in making Council fulfill its role of governing the University and checking any such government interference.

5.6.2 Appointment of College Personnel

In accordance with Statute XVI, paragraph 2 of the University Act (1998), which stated that “there shall be in each college of the University, a sub-committee of the Appointments Committee to be known as the Appointments and Disciplinary Sub-Committee” (p. 285), College Appointments Committees were instituted and were chaired by the college Principal. According to the statutes, the other members of the College Appointments Committee included the College Registrar, Deans and one senior member of staff.

Before starting the recruitment process, the college notified the University Office of the vacancy to be filled. For any newly created positions, the college had to justify such positions by applying to Senate through the Academic Planning Committee (APC), a subcommittee of the Senate. The position to be filled was therefore either newly created or an old one. For any position that was to be filled, the process was the same in that the vacancy was advertised, candidates who qualified were interviewed and recommendations were made to the University Office for approval.

Respondents felt that the need to seek University Office approval interfered with the autonomy of the colleges, but being a university with a federal system of administration, the University Office was bound to exercise its coordinating role by ensuring that colleges maintained similar practices in their performance throughout the University. It was argued that the reporting to the University Office did not interfere with who was appointed to any position.

In UNIMA, the college personnel were the administrators and faculty members. The administrators included the Principal, Vice Principal, Registrar, Finance Officer, Librarian, Deans and Heads of Department. The faculty members included lecturers at all levels. The other members of staff recruited were the Clerical, Technical and Support (CTS) staff.

5.6.2.1 Recruitment of College Administrators

Whilst the recruitment of a college Principal was a University Office activity, the recruitment of the other posts were decentralized to the colleges. In the following section, we will discuss the recruitment of college administrators: Vice-Principal, the Deans, the Registrar, the Finance Officer, and the Heads of Department.

5.6.2.1.1 Appointment of the Vice-Principal and Deans of Faculty

Any vacancy in these positions was advertised internally within the college and academics who qualified were encouraged to apply. The candidates were interviewed by the College Appointments Committee, chaired by the college Principal. The committee had a free hand to select the best candidate, who was endorsed by the University Office; government did not interfere in the process.

5.6.2.1.1 Appointment of Registrar, Finance Officer and Librarian

Any vacancy in these positions was advertised externally and those who qualified were short-listed. After being interviewed by the College Appointments Committee, the successful candidate was offered the position and, as was the practice, the University Office was advised. Under the coordination of the University Office, the College Registrars and Finance Officers could be transferred to work in any constituent college of the University, depending on the particular administrative need of a college. This was an accepted practice for enriching the administrative machinery of UNIMA.

Apart from being college administrators, the Registrar and Finance Officer also worked hand-in-hand with the University Office administrators, the University Registrar and the University Finance Officer. The movement of the officers among colleges was an internal arrangement by UNIMA and the government did not interfere with the practice.

5.6.2.1.2 The Appointment of Head of Department

The positions mentioned so far required the candidate to go through an interview before being offered the position. The appointment of a Head of Department (HOD)

was different in that it was a departmental activity and a member of department was made head by being voted into office by the departmental members. The process was chaired by the Dean of the Faculty and was respondents felt that the process was completely autonomous as departmental members decided on the head of department through an independent voting system.

In *summary*, this section contained an explanation of the recruitment process of college administrators. Interview data indicated that there was a high level autonomy in college recruitment of college administrators: the Vice-Principal, the Deans, the Registrar, the Finance Officer and the Heads of Department, as candidates who qualified and performed satisfactorily at the interviews were appointed. Even though the University Office was informed of the interview results, this was a formality and respondents felt that the college recruitment committee had full autonomy to make the final decisions.

5.6.2.2 Recruitment of College Faculty Members

In this section, the recruitment process of staff into academia will be discussed. There were several entry points into academia. The lowest level was Staff Associate rising to Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and the highest level was Professor. Those with a Bachelors degree of either credit or distinction quality were normally recruited as Staff Associates and after obtaining a Masters degree and depending on performance were promoted to assistant lecturer, and over the years worked their way through to Professorial rank. Colleges were mandated to fill these positions by following laid down guidelines.

Respondents indicated that in general, each department had established positions at each level and the Academic Planning Committee of Senate approved these positions at the time the department was established. When a vacancy existed in a department, the College Registrar advertised the position in the media and the qualified candidates applied, were shortlisted and interviewed. The successful candidate was then appointed. Commenting on this process, one Head of Department (HOD) noted:

We look at the establishment, since once in a while, some members of staff leave the college for greener pastures so we have to get someone to take their place. First the departmental committee looks at the need to fill the vacancy and then the HOD communicates to the Registrar the need for recruitment. The Registrar in consultation with the HOD on the terms of reference will advertise and applications will be received, short-listed and invited for the interviews. Present at the interviews will be the subject specialist, HOD, the Dean, Librarian and the Registrar, who will act as the secretary with the Principal as the chair. In some cases, an independent person from another department may be invited. *(Interview 1)*

The decision to recruit a new member of staff was delegated to colleges, and college administrators worked closely with the departments in the process.

In summary, the respondents pointed out that the selection of faculty members was solely a college exercise, as the College Appointments Committee was free from outside influence. They felt that UNIMA had a lot of autonomy in this process and as long as a college had a budget for the position, a candidate from anywhere who qualified could fill the vacancy. As a formality, the University Office was informed of the new appointment.

5.6.3 Promotion of UNIMA Employees and Granting of Ranks

At UNIMA, the responsibility for the promotion of staff was the responsibility of the University Council. However, the actual promotion of academic staff was affected by the Appointments Committee on behalf of the University Council upon

recommendation from College Promotions Committees. An individual who was promoted was granted a new position or rank. In this section, both the promotion and granting of ranks at UNIMA have been described.

5.6.3.1 Promotion of UNIMA Employees

The promotion exercise had a laid down time-table, which started in February of each year by circulating the information about the exercise. The process ended in July of the same year when the applicants were informed of the outcome of the process. This process was initiated by the University Registrar's Office and coordinated in the colleges by the College Registrars. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, the University of Malawi had criteria for the promotion of both academic and administrative staff. Promotion criteria for academicians were related to research/scholarship, teaching experience and effectiveness, administrative/university duties and community contributions. For the administrative staff, their promotion was determined by length of service, qualifications and experience.

Commenting on the process, one senior college administrator observed:

We have a process where every year members of staff apply. We have application forms and there is a criterion that people have to follow. If people meet the criteria, they are either promoted and if they fall short somewhere, they are informed accordingly. This process was carried out every year for all levels of staff and was initiated by the office of the University Registrar. At college level, it was coordinated by the office of the College Registrars. (*ExtInterview 19*)

Commenting on the promotion process, one Head of Department observed:

In my perspective, we do not promote people; they promote themselves. We have detailed criteria for promotion. It is not that the head of department will recommend that someone is promoted but it will depend on what the individual has done in terms of research and publications and then claim the promotion based on that work. (*Interview 1*)

The sentiment in this quotation was that since the criteria for promotion were clear to all University staff, the task of the Appointments Committee was to verify that those who were recommended for promotion met the approved criteria. Those who did not satisfy the criteria needed not apply. Respondents felt that the process was transparent and operated without any outside interference.

The promotion process at UNIMA was summarized by a senior officer at the University Office as follows:

Promotions up to associate professor are considered at college level. Professorial grade is considered at the university level. Those who would like a promotion to another grade will have to satisfy the requisite credentials. They will fill an application form, which will have to be supported by the Head of Department and Dean before submitting it to the college Principal. The college promotions committee will meet under the chairmanship of the college Principal to consider the promotions. Just like the new appointments, the University Appointments Committee scrutinizes the recommendations of the College Promotions Committee before making the final approval. A similar process is also followed for administrative promotions. (*Interview 24*)

5.6.3.2 Granting of Ranks

As noted earlier, academic ranks in UNIMA ranged from staff associate to full professor. UNIMA had full autonomy in granting ranks to all its members of staff, academics and administrators alike, depending on qualification and experience. The promotional criteria cited above were followed in all the cases. The college promotions committee had the mandate to place individuals up to the rank of associate professor. All placements at every level had to be verified by the Appointments Committee of Council.

Commenting on the granting of ranks, one senior college administrator explained:

At the interview, members use the criteria to make sure that it is being followed. Once the interviews are done, salaries and entry points are determined in the Registrar's office, using a well-documented pamphlet. The candidate's qualifications, experience, age, previous salary and so on determine the entry point. This completed document on the candidate will then pass through the College Principal, who will endorse it, to the Vice Chancellor at the University Office, for his endorsement of the rank and salary placement. (*Interview 28*)

To award full professorship to an individual, UNIMA brought in an external perspective to the decision process. The procedure was similar to that of promoting any academic member of staff. However the University Office makes the final decision.

Once we have interviewed at College level, we will write a report to the University Office to inform them that "we have interviewed this candidate at professor level and after vetting the submitted documents, the College Appointments Committee is happy that the person can be employed at professor level and these are the references and all the paper documentation." The report plus the Curriculum Vitae and other references are sent to the University Appointments Committee, where the our college is represented by the Principal, who will submit the candidate. (*ExtInterview 18*)

After confirming the candidate, the University Council appointed three international referees to comment on the eligibility of the candidate to the rank of a professor, and Council's decision to approve or reject a candidate's promotion to full professorship was dependent on comments from the international referees. Respondents felt that government interference in this process was not evident.

5.6.4 Questionnaire Findings: Personnel Matters

In the area of personnel matters, *nine* variables were included in the questionnaire. These were (1) the appointment of the Vice Chancellor, (2) the dismissal of the Vice Chancellor, (3) the appointment senior academic staff, (4) the dismissal of

senior academic staff, (5) the appointment of other academic staff, (6) the termination or discipline of staff, (7) academic tenure, (8) the appointment or dismissal of general staff and (9) academic pay and conditions. The results of the questionnaire analysis will be reported in two sections: legal authority of government to intervene, and government influence on personnel matters.

5.6.4.1 Legal authority of Government to intervene in Personnel Matters

The findings of this section, based on the responses from the legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act, indicated that government had no legal authority in any of the nine areas. Specifically, government had no legal authority to intervene in the appointment or dismissal of the Vice Chancellor; senior academic staff, or indeed any member of staff in the University. Similarly, the government had no legal authority to intervene in the tenure of academic staff, their pay and conditions. The University had autonomy on personnel matters.

5.6.4.2 Perceived Government influence in Personnel Matters

Data from the 25 respondents were analyzed and the results were summarized in Figure 5.7. In the area of *appointment and dismissal of the Vice Chancellor*, a total of 66% of the candidates held the opinion that government exerted its influence in the appointment of the Vice Chancellor either from time to time (33%) or often (33%). The analysis showed a similar result for the dismissal of the Vice Chancellor. A total of 60 per cent of the candidates thought government's influence was exerted from either time to time (40%) or often (20%). The respondents' assessment was that the appointment of the Vice Chancellor was the responsibility of Council and that the presence of

government officials in Council indicated government influence over who was appointed.

With regard to the *appointment and dismissal of senior academic staff*, all the respondents indicated that government did not exert significant influence. The statistics indicated that a total of 100% felt that government either never exerted any influence (80%) or only rarely (20%) in the appointment of senior staff and that all (100%) thought that government either did not exert significant influence in the dismissal of staff (60%) or did so only rarely (40 per cent). The general picture from the respondents was that since the appointment of staff was predominantly a task decentralized to colleges, government's influence was not evident. Respondents held the opinion that UNIMA had autonomy to recruit and dismiss staff.

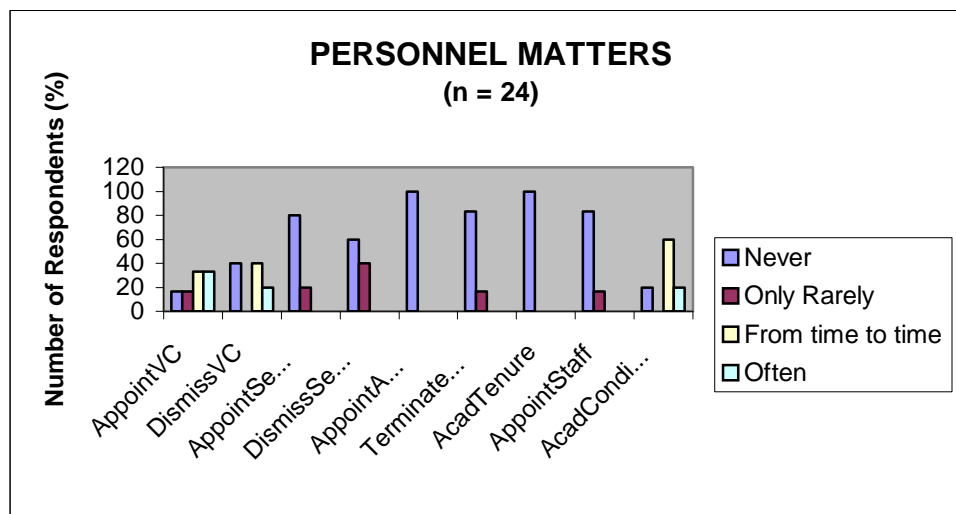


Figure 5.7: Perceived Extent of Government Influence on Personnel Matters

In the *appointment and dismissal or discipline of other academic staff*, the results showed that all respondents thought that government did not exerted significant influence on the appointment of other academic staff. Similarly, a total of 100% of the

respondents thought that government either did not exert significant influence in the termination or discipline of academic staff (83%) or only rarely (17%). Since the appointment of academic staff was the responsibility of the colleges, respondents felt that government influence was very remote and the University had autonomy in this area.

In terms of *academic tenure*, all the respondents felt that the government never exerted significant influence. This suggested that UNIMA had complete autonomy in determining who got tenure or not. Similar results were revealed in the area of appointment and dismissal of general staff as 100% felt that government either never exerted significant influence in the appointment or dismissal of general staff (83%) or did so only rarely (17%). Since the recruitment of staff was decentralized to colleges, respondents felt that government influence was minimal.

The last area was *academic pay and conditions of employment*. Even though government had no legal authority to intervene in academic pay and conditions, the results showed that 80% of the respondents thought that government exerted significant influence either from time to time (60%) or often (20%). The reason for this thinking was probably because government funded the University and academic pay/conditions were drawn from the consolidated funds, which called for consent from government. In this case government controlled this area, albeit indirectly.

5.6.5 Summary

In this section, institutional autonomy of UNIMA in personnel affairs was discussed. Three areas were identified: the appointment of university administrators, the

appointment of college personnel and the promotion of UNIMA staff. This was followed by a discussion of the questionnaire findings.

The appointment of university administrators was mostly under the responsibility of Council. The Appointments Committee, through a *search committee*, was responsible for the recruitment of all the University Office personnel, which included the Vice Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer, the Internal Auditor and the College Principals. The normal procedure was the identification of a vacancy to be filled, which was followed by an advertisement for applications, short listing of candidates, the interview itself and recommendation to Council after an offer was made to the successful candidate. All the officers of the University Office were recruited in the normal way and government did not interfere with the process.

The appointment of college personnel was decentralized to the colleges. The College Appointments Committee recruited staff at the college level and reported the University Office for ratification due to the University's federal system of administration. As the recruitment process of both administrators and academic members of staff followed specific guidelines, University Office ensured that the College Appointments Committee worked within the guidelines. Those who excelled in this process were offered the positions and there was no external influence.

The promotion criteria for both academic and administrative staff of the University were outlined in Chapter 4. In addition to recruitment of university staff, the Appointments Committee of Council and the College Appointments Committee were also responsible for promotions. Interview data revealed that the committees followed

the set criteria and this gave no chance for outside interference. The promotion and placement processes were completely autonomous, purely academic exercises, free from any outside interference. The part played by Council was to ensure that the promotion criteria, as specified in the guidelines, were being followed.

The questionnaire results revealed that legally, government did not have the authority to intervene in the appointment or dismissal of the Vice Chancellor, appointment or dismissal of senior academic staff, appointment or termination of academic staff, academic tenure, appointment or dismissal of general staff and academic pay and conditions. The respondents felt that in practice, the government exerted some influence in the appointment and dismissal of the Vice-Chancellor and academic pay and conditions. In these two areas, the autonomy of the University to operate, however, was restricted. Government did not exert significant influence in appointment and dismissal of senior academic staff, appointment and termination of other academic staff, academic tenure and appointment or dismissal of general staff. In these areas, the University had autonomy, as government did not interfere.

5.7 Examination of Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Academic Matters

In examining the extent of UNIMA's autonomy in academic matters, the areas that were examined were the determination of academic disciplines and programmes, the selection of textbooks and other teaching materials, the quality of teaching, the research and publication and finally the collaboration with other institutions.

5.7.1 Determination of Academic Disciplines and Programmes

Respondents were of the opinion that UNIMA had considerable freedom in determining academic programmes. Any new programme introduced at the University of Malawi followed a bottom-up approach and went through several committees. A new

programme was first discussed at the departmental level. The recommendations from the department were further discussed at faculty level before the proposal for the new programme was passed on to the Academic and Planning Committee for further discussion. Senate was the final committee, which ratified the new programme. The process for any new course introduced in the university went through four stages, from department, faculty, Academic Planning Committee and finally the Senate, who approved all academic courses. Government did not interfere in this process.

Respondents revealed that there were at least three main sources of new programmes. The *first* source was government, which, at times, came up with ideas for a programme and requested the University to run the programme. An example of this was cited by one of the college Deans:

The request to introduce the Bachelor of Science in Irrigation course came from government, through the Ministry of Agriculture. They sent a request to Bunda College asking if it was possible to train people in Irrigation Engineering. In that way, government would save money by training the engineers at home rather than overseas. (*Interview 21*)

The same respondent made another observation with respect to new programmes:

We have started another programme, which is on a direct request from the Ministry of Agriculture. The background to the request was that quite a number of people who were trained at the diploma level, though doing well in the field, were not of promotable calibre. The college was requested to mount a programme that was a kind of in-service for the diplomates. Government wanted the diplomates to be upgraded to a B.Sc level. After hearing that some universities in Africa were engaged in a similar programme, we were linked through SASKAWA, with three other universities in Africa – Makerere in Uganda, Sokoine in Tanzania and Alimea in Ethiopia. These three universities have created what we call SAFE Programme – an in-service type of programme whereby we bring in those mature students that are working with extension agents, give them a few courses and then we send them back to their work with a clearly worked out project plan and that project plan has to be supervised by the employer and our staff go to supervise the project. After about a year or so in the field, they will come back to the University to complete the rest of the training. All the other three universities, Makerere, Sokoine and Alimea have

implemented the programme; Bunda has mapped out the courses that will be offered and the entire package has been approved by Senate, ready for implementing in September, 2005. (*Interview 21*)

Any such requests for a specific programme followed the established procedures before being accepted as a university programme. Interview data seemed to suggest that the process was a purely an academic exercise and that there was no interference from Government.

Documentary review supported the results of an interview with a senior administrator at the college by pointing out that College of Medicine, the latest addition to the UNIMA's constituent colleges, was the result of government's wish to address the shortage of doctors in Malawi. Government requested the establishment of the College of Medicine and the University of Malawi was asked to operationalize it.

Respondents identified a *second* source of programmes at UNIMA as the departments themselves. Each college looked at the areas that were emerging and were critical to the economic development of the country. Through departmental meetings, needs assessments for new courses in such areas were conducted and decisions were made on specific programmes. The assessment reports became a subject of college academic discussions, which culminated in a new programme being established. A college senior administrator provided the following comments on the establishment of new programmes:

What we normally do is to sound out with the stakeholders for the important areas. Our own staff look round to determine what areas need strengthening. When we find the area, we try to get hold of the stakeholders who may be interested and hold discussions with them through a workshop or meeting that we organize. Depending on the results of the deliberations of the meetings, departmental, faculty and APC meetings take place after which Senate will approve the new programme. (*Interview 18*)

In order to illustrate the practical application of this process, the senior administrator continued:

An example is the B.Sc in Agro-Business Management, which started at Bunda because of the outcry from our stakeholders for lack of business skills of our agricultural graduates. To address the deficiency, we liaised with our stakeholders and we came up with courses in Agro-Business Management, for example, accounting courses, etc. We started putting the proposal at faculty level for discussion. We then went back to the stakeholders for their approval of our findings and the proposed structure of the new course. After their approval, we took it to APC, who accepted it and then Senate approved. The programme is now on the ground. (*Interview 18*)

A *third* source of programmes at UNIMA was the business community. Departments received requests from the business community and the University had, on most occasions, accepted the challenge.

Respondents revealed that there was a lot of autonomy for the University in academic decisions. As noted earlier, there had been a dramatic change in the exercise of institutional academic freedom among the academics since 1994, when Malawi changed from one-party to multi-party system of government. This sentiment was expressed by senior officer at the University Office:

We have lots of autonomy in the current atmosphere to make all kinds of decisions. Even in terms of intellectual academic freedom, our experts in the Political Science Department and legal experts in the Law Department at Chancellor College are quoted daily on major topical issues related to the constitution in the current political atmosphere as it is unfolding. This would have been practically impossible before 1994. (*Interview 24*)

A number of respondents alluded to the general feeling that government needed to be proactive in giving the University general direction as to what courses and programmes would be relevant to the needs of the economy. Thereafter, the University had to be left

alone to run those programmes in the most efficient and effective way, as long as government provided sufficient resources in support of the programmes.

5.7.2 Selecting of Textbooks and Other Teaching Materials

Respondents and University documents indicated that textbooks and other teaching materials for the courses run at UNIMA were determined internally, at the departmental level. Each college, faculty and department had the necessary autonomy in this respect. One Head of Department described the practice of textbook selection in UNIMA:

The course lecturer decides on the textbooks guided by the curriculum. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to find out what is available, what needs to be updated, what new books need to be added. The lecturer then submits the list to head of department or the librarian. (*Interview 23*)

A college Dean concurred:

When we are designing a course, textbooks are indicated and we discourage textbooks that are old. The lecturer recommends textbooks in line with the curriculum and in my course, for example, I frown at any book that is older than 10 years. In my own course content, among the textbooks that I have recommended, you'll find that it's the mostly up-to-date ones. (*Interview 21*)

At UNIMA, the selection of textbooks was the responsibility of the lecturer, the department and the dean of faculty. Government had given full liberty to UNIMA in the decision on textbooks.

Even though students were expected to buy the textbooks for their use, the high cost of books made it difficult for students to purchase personal copies. A list of the recommended textbooks for each course was passed on to the College Librarian, who, after compiling the full list for the college and funds permitting, proceeded to purchase the books. One college Librarian commented on this process:

Recommendations for books to stock in the library for the various subjects come to us through departments. We never decide on any particular titles especially those that were relevant to various courses; that is a sole responsibility of the departments. As much as possible, lecturers in faculty were involved in choosing what they thought was relevant to their courses. Occasionally, the library will buy on its own, especially reference books and other outstanding informational resources without referring to academic staff, but on many occasions, most of the books will be bought at the recommendation of academic departments or faculty. (*Interview 9*)

Respondents indicated that, unlike before 1994, decision on textbooks was the responsibility of the department that offered the programme and government did not interfere. The recommendation by the lecturer who taught the course and approval by Head of Department and/or the Dean of faculty was final. Before 1994, government, through the Censorship Board, always interfered with certain book titles, deeming them unsuitable for Malawi. Such books ended up being on the *banned books* list.

5.7.3 Quality of Programmes

Academic programmes were regularly subjected to a review process. In an institution like UNIMA, there was need for a formal academic structure for programme validation. A senior administrator at the University Office provided the following overview of programme quality, including the level of presentation in the lecture room:

The quality of delivery of programmes in the university is largely controlled by academics themselves. Programmes are vetted to ensure that they are of high quality. Apart from that, we have this external examining system and that is another way of bringing in an outside eye to critically see whether what we are doing is comparable with what is deemed to be acceptable worldwide. In some colleges like the College of Medicine, they do assess lecturers when a course has been taught. At the end of the course, there is a form the students complete and the head of department looks at these forms. If the points are adverse, a discussion between the lecturer and the head of department will follow so as to institute a remedial process. (*Interview 24*)

One of the college Principals explained that international standards were maintained at the colleges. The respondent provided the following comments:

We try and we want our college to be recognized internationally, so the curriculum has to reflect international standards. Departments are developed or there are key departments that are in existence and have been in existence since the beginning of the college. These international standards do not restrict our autonomy, but are helpful to ensure that we optimize our resources. In fact international standards act like a mirror, helping us to look at what is going on and to try and mark up to their evidence- based best practice. (*Interview 15*)

In other colleges, the curriculum committee had student representatives who commented on the learning process. This was aimed at improving the quality of teaching in the University.

Respondents insisted that despite the efforts by UNIMA to maintain programme quality, there was need for external validation to ensure that the university met the national and international standards. As was mentioned earlier, the use of external examiners was extensively pursued in the past. However, due to lack of funding, the use of external examiners was drastically reduced as it was considered a luxury. The quality of delivery of programmes was then largely controlled by fellow academics. Only in selected cases were external examiners still being used. One respondent termed this practice *internal validation* as “the course was developed, validated, examined, assessed and degrees awarded by UNIMA academics” (*Interview 7*). Assuming sufficient funding was available, one respondent recommended a resumption of the *old practice* when external examiners were invited every year for each faculty to discuss academic issues, including programme quality. This practice was considered as “another way of bringing in an outside eye to critically see whether what we are doing is comparable with what is deemed to be accurate worldwide” (*Interview 7*).

A similar observation on the importance of an external examiner was made by one of the college Deans:

The role of the external examiner is to advise. Each department is supposed to have an external examiner. These are supposed to come, if funds are available, every year, so that they examine in person, see the teaching facilities, interview or hold some discussions with some members of staff and students. But with our meager resources, our external examiners come at once after two, three or even four years. This does not allow us to have our standards examined by an external body. The external examiner reports together with the examination results are sent to the Senate, which will ask the department to take corrective measures on the issues raised by the external examiner. (*Interview 14*)

Despite the need for external validation, which is standard academic practice in most universities, respondents felt that UNIMA had considerable autonomy in determining the quality of programmes it offered, using the internal validation system.

The Government's position on quality of academic standards was made clear by one senior government official, who itemized the ingredients in quality education:

Quality is a product of the interaction of certain ingredients and these are qualified staff, adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials, conducive environment where people with teach peacefully, securely and comfortably, but also must have some other person who measures or monitors that quality. In schools, inspectors monitor this; but in UNIMA, we have *external examiners*. Unfortunately, the external examiner is just a shot; what is needed is a continuous evaluation and assessment. Ideally, if there are lecturers and professors who are well qualified, dedicated, have teaching and learning materials which are up-to-date, useful, appropriate, the conditions are favourable, students are appropriately qualified, then we will have quality education. Minus those things, the quality will be affected. (*ExtInterview 6*)

Clearly, the availability of resources was implied in the government officials' overview, and the way UNIMA was being funded could play a role in the type of UNIMA's products. As was mentioned under the financial affairs, the University had limited much autonomy in the use of funds.

Requested to comment on the role of government on academic standards, the government official responded:

Government is not involved directly, because as a statutory institution, UNIMA is autonomous and we always play our role in this area through the University

Council. We hold bilateral meetings from time to time with the University and standards are discussed at such meetings. Other times, we encourage the Treasury to pour more money into the University, assuming the money will help improve standards in the University. We also get involved by encouraging the University, through discussions, letters or meetings to look at specific areas which we feel need attention. So we do something, but not always directly.
(ExtInterview 6)

The position of government was to get the best out of UNIMA, set the policy in place, but leave the University to function as an autonomous institution.

Connected to the issue of academic standards was the need for accreditation of institutions of higher learning which were mushrooming all over the country, raising the issue of standards in tertiary education in the country. The absence of a department of higher education at the Ministry of Education was *cause for concern* among a number of respondents. Asked to explain how government dealt with the issue of accreditation of the universities, a senior official from Ministry of Education acknowledged that the presence of a Council for Higher Education would be the solution and government was in the process of establishing such a council:

We have identified a team of consultants to look at the development of the document for government to enact a law. We have also identified a donor who is going to support us to develop that document. Once the law is passed by Parliament in March next year [2006], we shall then establish the Council for Higher Education, whose job will be to ensure that accreditation, standards etc, are controlled, so that we have comparable standards and qualifications.
(ExtInterview 8)

The establishment of the Council for Higher Education will take over the current monitoring role of the University by government. At that point, the regulation of tertiary education in Malawi will be passed on to the experts.

5.7.4 Research and Publications

Research played a very important role in the activities of UNIMA. All mission statements of the constituent colleges of UNIMA emphasized the need for research. Government supported the stance of UNIMA in its teaching and research. A comment from a senior government official stated:

We are responsible for ensuring that the higher education in this country performs not only routine jobs, but performs the core functions of teaching and research. We try to encourage teaching and research in the University, such that whenever we find a donor, we entice the donor to assist the University. Sometimes, when we have somebody who has a piece of research, we encourage that person to give the research to the University. (*ExtInterview 6*)

Realizing the importance of research, UNIMA used to have the office of a Research Coordinator at the university level, whose main responsibility was to coordinate the activities of research in all the constituent colleges. Due to restructuring at the central office, the research function was decentralized to colleges in 1996 and College Research and Publications Committees (RPC) had full responsibility for research decisions at the college level. One of the college RPC representatives explained the current developments in the area of research:

Up to 1996, the University Office, under the University Research Coordinator centrally controlled research in UNIMA. The control was in such areas as the writing and administering of research policies, soliciting of funding from donors, vetting and approving of research proposals and disbursement of research funds. In 1996, these activities were decentralized to colleges and currently, it is the responsibility of college research and publications committees (College RPC) to handle the research activities. (*Interview 6*)

In this section of the study, the role of college research and publication, the approval of research proposals and research publications were examined.

5.7.4.1 College Research and Publication Committee

Respondents revealed that the college RPCs were mandated to ensure that the college budgets included research and publication items. Further, the research committee had full autonomy to disburse the funds to researchers within the college who satisfied the requirements for research funding. Their autonomy also extended to writing, vetting and submitting of research proposals to donors for funding without government interference. Summarizing this development, a college RPC chairperson commented:

The fact that college research and publications committees are autonomous is a good thing. Autonomy gives a voice to the RPCs at the college level and encourages the colleges develop strategies of addressing not only the fund-raising issues, but also to developing a way of building capacity, so that they can appear to be leaders in research in their own areas at the national level. And here is where colleges that are innovative will excel and those that are not and have weak leadership will fall behind. (*Interview 1*)

5.4.7.2 Approval of Research Projects

Approval of research projects in Malawi was the responsibility of the National Research Council of Malawi (NRCM). There used to be a tight grip on research projects by the government, as every project had to go through it for clearance. The process had since been decentralized to colleges. The Council provided umbrella procedures and guidelines and each sectoral research committee developed their own specific guidelines befitting their sector but drawing from the umbrella guidelines. Commenting on this development, a senior government official from NRCM explained:

Since 1974 when the NRCM was established, research was being cleared at the Research Council. From 1994, we saw that there was great need for delegating some of the powers of the Research Council to institutions. The Research Council realized there was heavy magnitude of research coming into the country, both from within and from outside. There was too much work and the processing was taking too long, too bureaucratic and frustrating on the

academicians. One such powers was the review process, the clearance of research proposals to central research coordinating committees where they existed. (*ExtInterview 3*)

There were certain research projects, however, which were still cleared by the government. One college RPC representative expanded on the research clearance:

The NRCM has delegated institutions like the UNIMA to clear research projects that are less sensitive, like the purely scientific projects, on their behalf. However, there are some research projects that involve humans; such need ethical consideration and are therefore cleared at the national level. (*Interview 6*)

Another research clearance provision in connection with ‘sensitive’ areas was mentioned by a government official from NRCM:

When it comes to the review or clearance of health-related research in this country, that would be cleared by the National Health Science Research Committee (NHSRC), which is a committee of the National Research Council of Malawi. However, due to Committee’s infrequency of meeting and accumulation of proposals, College of Medicine was given special permission by NRCM to set up College of Medicine Research and Ethics Committee in 1997, with powers to clear research on behalf of the NHSRC, on behalf of the National Research Council of Malawi. What is done at College level is to approve studies which are college based, and not of national interest. They can approve studies done by their lecturers and students, as well as their sister colleges, such as the College of Nursing. However, if the studies are of national interest, then approval will be referred to the main committee. (*ExtInterview 3*)

Despite the decentralization of research approvals to colleges, the University did not have complete autonomy in approving all types of research. There was still need to refer some research proposals to the NRCM for their approval.

In terms of priority of research areas, government explained that the priorities were set for those researchers who wished to apply for government grants, which were dispersed under Research Grant Scheme of the NRCM. The government official reported:

Through the Research Programmes Committee, we serve you with the procedures and guidelines for that research grant scheme. The committee sets priorities annually in which those grants will be disbursed. A call for research proposals in those priority areas is then made to the public, institutions, etc. Any research proposal outside the priority areas has a minimum chance of being funded. (*ExtInterview 3*)

Based on submissions from and consultations with a variety of stakeholders at national level, Research Programmes Committee set priority research areas, which attracted government grants. According to a government official, the basic guideline for a research topic was that it had to be demand-driven for the benefit of the nation; otherwise any researcher was free to engage in any topic but the government only funded those research topics which were within the published priority areas. Researchers with topics outside the priority areas applied to foreign donors for funding. Interview data showed that UNIMA followed the government guidelines in its proposal approval and that there was no government interference with the process. There was a high level of autonomy in the process in that staff prepared research proposals which were then vetted by the college research and publication committees and sent either to NRCM for funding by government or to donors directly for funding; government did not interfere.

5.7.4.3 Research Publications

In terms of publications, researchers observed that post-1994 UNIMA had considerable autonomy in what it decided to publish. Commenting on this freedom to publish, a college RPC representative commented:

Most of the publications I have seen through are simply straight scientific packages; they are policy documents like those on empowerment, bio-diversity, wetlands and so on. In certain cases, conference proceedings are published for the university-wide RPC. The government has never considered the publishing

of such documents to be sensitive and so they have never interfered with their publication. (*Interview 6*)

The feeling of government with regard to research publication was guarded. NRCM considered publication as meeting one of its objectives of dissemination of research findings and therefore encouraged it. However, most researchers did not feel obliged to do so in Malawi; preferring instead to publish in overseas research journals. The senior government official from NRCM commented:

In terms of publications, it is a regulation that research that has been done on the soils of Malawi must be published. However, in terms of ownership, the research is owned by Malawi government. Even if it is a foreign sponsored research, as long as it was done here, the information belongs to Malawi and therefore it must be published in Malawi. Any research done in Malawi should first be cleared in Malawi before being published outside Malawi, through either the College of Medicine Research and Publications or the NHSRC. They apply for reviewing the manuscript or an article for publishing outside. (*ExtInterview 3*)

Respondents noted that UNIMA had a high level of autonomy in the decisions to publish, especially post-1994 when UNIMA has been experiencing less interference from government (the Censorship Board) in publications.

In summary, research was considered the lifeblood of UNIMA and the University of Malawi's objectives clearly emphasized the importance of research. UNIMA had complete autonomy in deciding areas of research when outside donors were involved in funding the research. However, for a government research grant, researchers had to meet research priorities as set by the National Research Council of Malawi. At UNIMA, approval of research proposals in less sensitive areas was decentralized to Research and Publications Committees at college level, leaving the National Research Council of Malawi to handle the sensitive, health related areas. The

approval process for any research project was therefore made easier as these committees operated autonomously.

5.7.5 Questionnaire Findings: Academic Matters

In the area of academic matters, *three* main areas were identified: curriculum and teaching (with six sub-topics), academic standards, (which had five sub-topics), and research and publication, (with four sub-topics). The results of the questionnaire analysis will be reported separately, for each area, in two sections: *legal authority of government to intervene* and *perceived government influence*.

5.7.5.1 Legal authority of Government to intervene in Curriculum and Teaching

The *five* topics that were identified under *curriculum and teaching* were: (1) methods of teaching, methods of examination, (2) introduction of new teaching fields, (3) termination of teaching fields, (4) curriculum within fields and (5) selection of textbooks.

Using the responses from the legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act showed that government had no legal authority to intervene in any of the six topics. Ideally, the University had to have high level of autonomy to decide on the issues related to curriculum and teaching, such as methods of teaching and examination, introduction and termination of teaching fields, and the selection of textbooks.

5.7.5.2 Perceived Government influence in Curriculum and Teaching

Figure 5.8 summarizes the data that were collected from the 24 respondents. The respondents indicated that government either never exerted significant influence on

teaching methods (83%) or did so only rarely (17%). All respondents (100%) believed that government never exerted any influence on the *examination methods* and the University had complete autonomy in this topic. Sixty-seven per cent of the candidates felt that government either never exerted significant influence in the *introduction of new teaching fields* (50%) or did so only rarely (17%).

However, 33% had the opinion that government did exert its influence from time to time. In terms of *termination of teaching fields*, 33% thought that government never exerted any influence and 67% felt government exerted the influence only rarely. Similar results were observed *curriculum within fields* as 67% of the respondents felt that government never exerted significant influence in the curriculum while 33% thought it did so only rarely. Finally, on the *selection of textbooks*, all the respondents (100%) felt that the University had full autonomy in the selection, as government never exerted any significant influence.

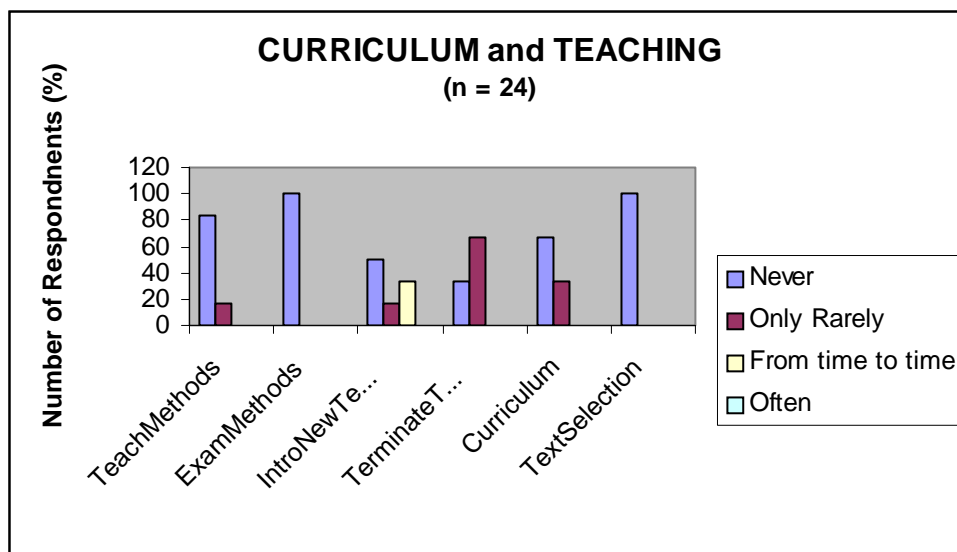


Figure 5.8: Perceived Extent of Government Does Influence on Curriculum and Teaching

Based on the questionnaire results in *curriculum and teaching*, respondents indicated that both legally and in practice, the University had autonomy to make decisions in curriculum and teaching. The extent of the autonomy ranged from some autonomy in teaching methods, introduction and termination of new teaching fields and curriculum within fields to high level of autonomy in methods of examination and the selection of textbooks.

5.7.5.3 Legal authority of Government to intervene in Academic Standards

The second area of discussion under the academic affairs was *academic standards*. The *five* topics that were identified were (1) entry standards of students, (2) graduation standards, (3) standards in particular subjects, (4) quality audits and (5) accreditation of institutions.

According to responses from the legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act, government had no legal authority to intervene in any of the five topics. An argument was made for the accreditation of institutions, but since government did not have the Council for Higher Education in place, it [government] did not have any legal authority to intervene. The implication of this result was that the University had complete autonomy in deciding on entry standards of students, graduation standards, standards in particular subjects and quality audits. However, the University could not accredit any institution, as that was to be a prerogative of the government.

5.7.5.4 Perceived Government influence in Academic Standards

The results of the analysis of data from the respondents are summarized in Figure 5.9. The results indicated that 67% of the respondents felt that government never

exerted significant influence in entry standards of the students into the University and 17% thought government did so rarely, while another 17% thought the influence was exerted from time to time. All the respondents (100%) felt that government never exerted significant influence in graduation standards, standards in particular subjects and quality audits. Finally, with regard to the accreditation of institutions, 50% felt that government did not exert significant influence in the accreditation of institutions; 16.7% thought government rarely exerted the influence and about 33% felt the influence was from time to time.

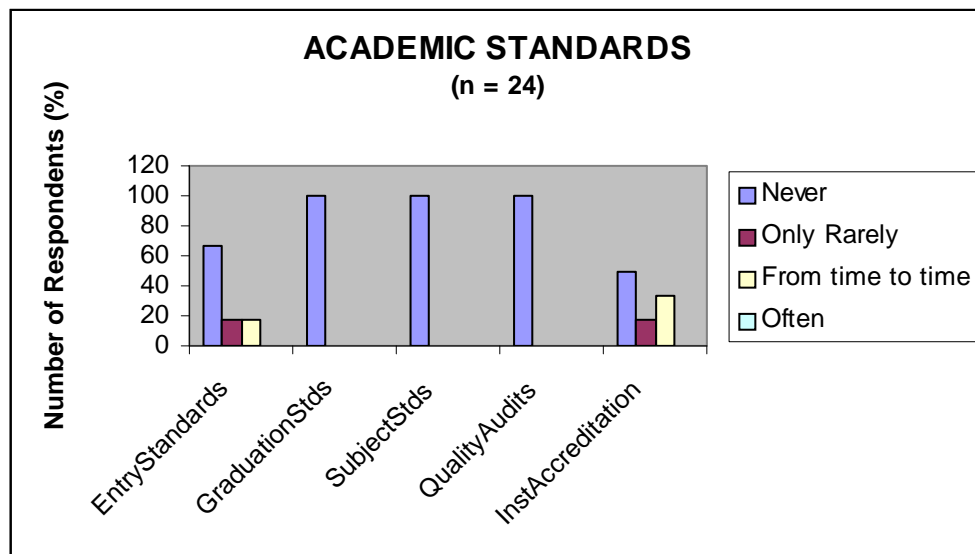


Figure 5.9: Perceived Extent of Government Influence in Academic Standards

To summarize the discussion in the area of *academic standards* in UNIMA, legally government could not intervene with entry standards of students, graduating standards, standards in particular subjects, quality audits and the accreditation of institutions. The overall picture of what actually happened was that the University had autonomy in all topics of academic standards that were identified in the questionnaire. The extent of the autonomy of the University ranged from some autonomy in entry

standards of students and accreditation of institutions to a high level of autonomy in graduation standards, subject standards and quality audits.

5.7.5.5 Legal authority of Government to intervene in Research and Publication

The third area of discussion under academic affairs was research and publication. The *four* topics that were identified were: (1) research priorities, (2) particular research topics, (3) approval of publications and (4) restrictions on public statements by academic staff. According to the responses from a legal expert and the interpretation of the University Act, government had legal authority to intervene in research priorities and approval of research done in Malawi but could not intervene in particular research topics or restrictions on public statements by academic staff.

5.7.5.6 Perceived Government influence in Research and Publication

The results of the analysis of data from the respondents are summarized in Figure 5.1. The results indicated that 50% of those sampled felt that government never exerted significant influence on *research priorities*; about 33% thought they did so only rarely while another 17% indicated that government influenced research priorities from time to time. Similar results were obtained in connection with restrictions on *public statement by academic staff*, as 40% of the respondents felt that government never exerted significant influence on restrictions on public statements by academic staff; another 40% thought government influenced only rarely and 20% felt the influence was from time to time. All the respondents thought that the University had a high level of autonomy in *research topics* and *approval of publication*, even though interview

findings indicated that government expected that research done in Malawi be published within the country.

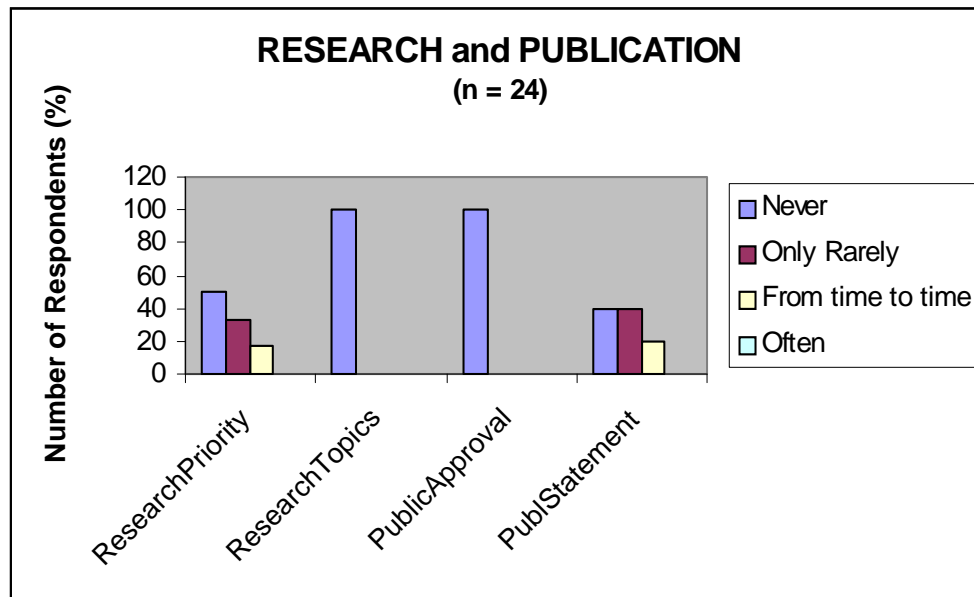


Figure 5.10: Perceived Extent of Government Influence in Research and Publication

To summarize the discussion in the area of *research and publication* in UNIMA, legally government could intervene in research priorities, especially if government funded the research and the publication of such research done in Malawi. However, government could not intervene in research topics or impose restrictions on public statements by academic staff. The overall picture of what actually happened at UNIMA was that the University had autonomy in all the topics identified under research and publication, ranging from some autonomy in research priorities and restrictions on public statements by academic staff, to considerable autonomy in research topics and approval of publications.

5.7.6 Summary

In this section, the institutional autonomy of UNIMA in academic matters was discussed. Four areas were identified: the determination of discipline and programmes,

the selecting textbooks, the quality of programmes, and finally the research and publication.

Requests from the business community, government or synergy from within the college departments represented sources of programmes run by UNIMA. The Senate approved all programmes, and the process of getting this approval started from a department, whose recommendations were passed on to the Faculty. The Dean of the faculty presented the faculty recommendations to Academic Planning Committee and Senate finally endorsed the programme. Respondents felt that this process was a purely an academic exercise and government influence did not play a role, even in cases where the request came from government.

The selection of textbooks and teaching material was determined internally at departmental level. The subject lecturer, who was the expert, was given the autonomy to determine the recommended texts and literature for the programme. The exercise was seen as autonomous, especially post 1994.

The qualities of the programmes were subject to a regular review by UNIMA faculty. There was also an external validation through external examiners to ensure that international standards were being maintained. The government was aware of the need for a regulatory body, such as Council for Higher Education, and measures were in place to establish such a Council. Respondents felt that government indirectly exerted influence on the quality of programmes at UNIMA through funding. They felt that overcrowded classrooms, lack of learning and teaching materials, and demotivated faculty due to poor salaries, among others, contributed to the declining quality of programmes at UNIMA.

Before 1996, research in UNIMA was coordinated by the University Office. In 1996, the function was decentralized to colleges and College Research and Publications Committees (RPC) were responsible for research. At the college level, RPC controlled research budgets, approved research proposals for donor funding and, using research guidelines from government, approved research projects on behalf of government. The University, in this process, was completely autonomous of the university if the funding came from a donor; slightly less autonomous if it was governmental funded research. Publishing research results was easier in post-1994 period than before. Government encouraged researchers to publish in local journals for knowledge preservation.

The respondents of the questionnaires held the opinion that government had no authority to intervene in curriculum and teaching. They felt that this gave complete autonomy to the University to determine the curriculum and teaching methods, even though government exerted some influence from time to time in the introduction of new teaching fields. For research and publication, government identified research priority areas, which it would fund and therefore exerted some influence in such areas, including the publication of the findings. However, Government did not intervene in self-initiated and donor-funded research.

5.8 Examination of Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Student Matters

In examining the extent of UNIMA autonomy in student matters, the two areas that were investigated were student admission and discipline.

5.8.1 Student Admission

There were two routes for admission into UNIMA's constituent colleges. The first route was the *normal entry* and the second was the *parallel* route. Since its founding in 1965, entry into UNIMA was through the normal entry route but in 2000,

the parallel route was introduced to address the concerns from the general public that too few candidates who qualified for entry into the University could be admitted because of shortage of bed-space.

5.8.1.1 The Normal Entry Route

Respondents explained that student selection to start university studies in the first year was in accordance with established criteria set by the University of Malawi. The qualifying examination was to pass the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) with six credits, including English. Before sitting for the MSCE examinations, each student made three ordered choices of the university college and course to pursue. The qualified candidates then sat for the University Entrance Examination (UEE), an examination geared toward establishing the numerical, language and logical skills of candidates. The final entry grade into the University was an aggregate score made up of fifty per cent of the MSCE grade and fifty per cent of the UEE grade. The candidates were then ranked from the highest to the lowest. A candidate who scored at least 50 per cent overall was eligible to be selected into UNIMA according to the individual's prior choice.

In the selection exercise, each college specified the grades a candidate had to achieve in order to be selected. While performance on the UEE examination was one criterion, the other was bed space in the college hostels. It was the practice at UNIMA that all those who gained admission to the University automatically became eligible for residential accommodation, which was provided by the respective colleges. The maximum number of first year students selected into UNIMA in any academic year, determined by the available bed space, was slightly over 800 in the entire university.

Bed space in each college determined the quota of students each college admitted in the first year. Research data showed that the student selection process was the responsibility of a university selection committee chaired by the Pro-VC, with College Principals, Deans and College Registrars as members.

A college Dean summarized the selection process by citing an example of selecting a first year B.Sc. in Agriculture student at Bunda College as follows:

The candidate must pass with six credits, four of which must be Biology, English Language, Physical Science, Mathematics and any other two to make a total of six credits. Any candidate who has scored these marks and chosen Bunda as first choice will be selected. A candidate who is weak in one of those essential subjects will not be selected to study at Bunda even if this was the candidate's first choice college. It is possible that the second choice college might opt for the candidate. This process goes on until Bunda has filled its quota. Other colleges follow a similar procedure. Some colleges tend to fill their quota quicker than others. Admission into colleges is clearly on merit and of course, bed-space. (*Interview 21*)

This process is centralized at the University Office and four out of the five colleges met to select the eligible candidates.

Respondents revealed that in the 2004-2005 academic year, 3400 candidates qualified for selection after obtaining an overall grade of at least 50%. Using the bed space criterion and the candidates' college and course choices, only 823 candidates were selected, giving a 24% admission rate (*Interview 21*). For the following 2005-2006 academic year, a similar picture emerged. Out of 4335 candidates who qualified, only 841 were selected, representing a 19% admission rate (University records, 2005). A breakdown of the first year selection for the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic years for the four colleges is shown in Table 5.2. Figures from the two academic years indicated that only 823 (in 2004) and 841 (in 2005) candidates were selected into UNIMA, representing a 24% and 19% admission rate respectively. The process left out

thousands of eligible candidates who qualified but could not enter into the University because of bed space.

Table 5.3

Summary of 2004 and 2005 first year selection

Institution*	2004		2005	
	Eligible	Selected**	Eligible	Selected**
Chancellor College		350		295
Polytechnic		256		354
Bunda College of Agriculture		152		130
Kamuzu College of Nursing		65		62
TOTAL	3400	823	4335	841
Admission Rate (%)		24		19

Note. * College of Medicine had a different selection process; their figures are not included. **These were the candidates who achieved a 50% overall grade.

Source: University of Malawi records.

5.8.1.2 The Parallel Programme

As an alternative to regular admission, the *parallel* route was introduced in 2000. Taking the scenario for the 2004-2005 academic year selection as an example, some of the 2,577 eligible candidates who were not selected into the University by the normal route still had a chance of getting a university education through the parallel route. Acknowledging the student recruitment problem faced by UNIMA, one senior administrator from University Office commented:

Since in any one year there are more qualified candidates than the space for the normal entry programmes, we tend to have a lot of qualified candidates that are left out but have the ability to pay. These are the ones who are considered for the parallel programme route. The decision for the parallel entry is left to the

colleges. The two selection criteria are a score of at least 50 per cent at UEE and the ability to pay. The University Office vets all those selected for the parallel programme to check against any abuse of the system. (*Interview 17*)

Bed space at a college was no longer a limiting factor. The college did not accommodate the students who entered the university through the *parallel entry route*. However the bed space criterion was replaced by the ability to pay a higher financial contribution fee. The *normal entry* students benefited from the full government scholarship after paying MK25000 per annum financial contribution fee and the Parallel Programme students paid a higher financial contribution fee of MK69000 per annum. These fees were much lower than the economic fee for a UNIMA student, which was at least MK320,000.

Respondents observed that the selection process was solely an academic exercise, free from any outside interference. All interviewees expressed satisfaction that since 1994, UNIMA had not experienced any external influence, either political or otherwise, in the selection of its students. “Entrance criteria into the university today follows laid down criteria, and no outside interference is tolerated,” reacted one respondent. (*Interview 17*). Based on the set criteria, the University had full autonomy in the selection of students. One respondent at college level concurred with this sentiment by stating that “our selection is very stringent, based solely on qualification and performance on the UEE. No outside influence comes to bear on who is selected” (*Interview 4*). A senior officer at the University Office agreed with the observation:

If a student is just picked from outside the normal system and goes to any of the colleges, that student, you can be sure, will not attend classes. Now it is difficult for anybody to interfere with the system. A Minister cannot say take my son; that son will not be able to attend classes because others will have known that this one did not go through the normal entrance, and there is likely to be trouble and is likely to leave. So interference is difficult because of the circumstances

now prevailing on the ground. In such circumstances, even the leadership cannot accept any interference. The practice of admitting students outside the normal because the parent is a 'somebody' cannot be tolerated. He comes here through the normal system, and if he fails, he will be withdrawn. (*Interview 5*)

The view of government on the selection of students was supportive of the fact that the University had complete autonomy in the process. A senior government official from the Ministry of Education observed:

We have no role in the selection of students. What makes us happy is that there is a good mechanism for selecting those that qualify for the university. The University selects students for the various colleges without government interference. We do not want to interfere because we are not an academic institution and they can know what they are doing. (*ExtInterview 6*)

Adding to the stance of government on the selection of students, another government official stated:

As a ministry, we can only hope and make sure that the elements of justice are followed; that he who has passed better gets selected. This has been the principal element of our ministry in the past and I think it will continue in the future. Because the best student will have to be selected, no emphasis has ever been played to select someone who is connected to someone in higher authority. (*ExtInterview16*)

Comments from both government officials (*ExtInterviews 6 and 16*) supported the interview data findings that the student selection process was completely an academic exercise and government did not interfere.

5.8.2 Student Discipline

Respondents pointed out that this was one of the most difficult areas at UNIMA. Taking the constituent colleges as communities, rules of conduct were necessary to assist the students live together with mutual respect for individual's convenience and comfort. Students received the college rules when they enrolled and it was up to the student to ensure that the implications of the rules were understood.

The students in the colleges organized themselves into a Students' Union whose representative council comprised students elected by the whole student body of the college concerned. Every student in UNIMA was a member of the Student Union in his/her college. All the Students Unions from the five constituent colleges formed a University of Malawi Students Union, UMSU, a body whose spheres of competence cut across those of college unions. The student representative council (SRC) was responsible for organizing various aspects of students' affairs, including extra-curricular activities for the students.

The University undertook several measures in the colleges to ensure student discipline was maintained. One such measure was the appointment of student advisors and personal tutors to assist those students with personal problems. The Principal was ultimately responsible for discipline within a college and for the conduct of the students. The College Disciplinary Committee supported the Principal in deciding on disciplinary issues.

Recognizing the difficulty of student discipline, UNIMA introduced a new officer within the college administration, the Dean of Students. This officer looked at the students' welfare and worked very closely with the students, addressing any problems as soon as they emerged. On the role of the Dean of Students, one incumbent stated:

As Dean of Students, I believe that I am a member of staff first but I am also a student, since I am supposed to look at their welfare. To do so, I have to behave like a student, so as to learn from them. This assists me to know the students' behaviors so that they will not trick me next time. (*Interview 22A*)

Asked to comment on how they handled disciplinary cases, the Dean responded:

We first give the student a verbal warning. The chat is intended to discipline the student. We have rules and regulations given to Year 1 students when they come and the student is reminded of these rules and advised to stop. If the behaviour is repeated, a written warning will follow. A continuation of the same will result in a disciplinary hearing and action. The Vice-Principal chairs the Disciplinary Committee and the President of Student Union is a member. After hearing from the student, the appropriate action will be recommended. (Interview 22A)

The Deans of Students were a valuable addition to the colleges in connection with student welfare and discipline. The University Office was also aware of the role the Deans were playing in the colleges. One senior officer from the University Office stated:

We have now on the ground Deans of Students. This is something that started about two years ago. We believe that by putting in Deans of Students who are much closer to the students, we have solved a lot of discipline problems. From this year, I took upon myself to be a Patron to the UNIMA Students Union. So, I know all the Presidents, their committees, and I know the whole UNIMA Students Union. So I know College committees as well as the umbrella, the UMSU. I have advised them to always give me a call whenever there is something that they feel is wrong at college level and needs to be sorted out. (Interview 17)

There was no interference from government on how the University disciplined the students. A senior government official confirmed the independence of UNIMA:

We have no role in the disciplining of the students. For discipline, it is the same thing. Because the students are in the hands of the university, it is the University administration that has to discipline the students. If they can't, nobody will. (ExtInterview 6)

Respondents supported the sentiments of government and UNIMA had the autonomy to implement the necessary disciplinary measures, including suspension or dismissal without government interference. The College Disciplinary Committee acted

independently and appeals system that operates at UNIMA avails the students to be heard in case of any disagreements.

5.8.3 Questionnaire Findings: Student Matters

In the area of student matters, *four* topics were identified: (1) entry standards, (2) methods of selection and admission of students, (3) pass and failure rates and (4) discipline for students. The results of the questionnaire are reported in two sections: legal authority of government to intervene and perceived government influence in student matters.

5.8.3.1 Legal authority of Government to intervene in Student Affairs

Based on the legal expert's responses and the interpretation of the University Act, government had no legal authority to intervene in *entry standards, student selection and admission, pass or fail rates and discipline for students*. UNIMA had a high level of autonomy in these areas.

5.8.3.2 Perceived Government influence in Student Affairs

The summarized data analysis results from the respondents is shown in Figure 5.11. The questionnaire results indicated that the majority of the respondents (83%) felt that government never exerted any significant influence on *entry standards into the University* and the other 17% felt that government intervened from time to time. The respondents felt that UNIMA had limited autonomy in determining the entry standards of students. Even though the methods for *selection and admission of students* were clearly documented, the respondents were equally divided on the exertion of influence by government. Thirty-three per cent felt that government never exerted any influence;

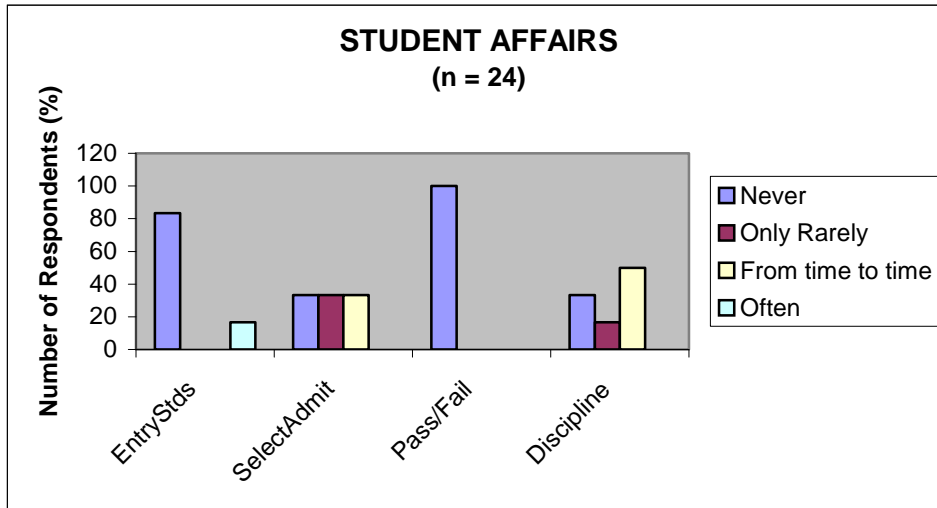


Figure 5.11: Perceived Extent of Government Influence in Student Affairs

another 33% thought government did so rarely and 33% felt that the influence was exerted from time to time. The respondents were unanimous on *pass or fail rates*. They all felt that government never exerted any significant influence. The respondents felt that UNIMA had high level of autonomy in determining pass or fail rates.

Finally, the respondents were divided on the extent to which government exerted influence on *discipline of students*. Thirty-three per cent of the respondents felt that government never exerted significant influence, 17% thought the influence was exerted only rarely and 50% felt it was exerted from time to time.

5.8.4 Summary

In this section, institutional autonomy of UNIMA in student matters was discussed. The two areas that were identified were student admission and student discipline. The section ended with a discussion of the questionnaire findings.

Admission to UNIMA was through either the normal route or the parallel programme. There were clearly outlined criteria for admission, which included passing the University Entrance Examination (UEE). The process was followed rigorously by University Selection Committee, without any external influence. Thousands of candidates qualified but UNIMA could only admit about 800 students due to bed space. In 2000, UNIMA introduced the parallel programme scheme, which allowed university attendance on non-residential basis. The respondents felt that the selection process at UNIMA was completely autonomous and that the candidates were selected on merit.

According to the respondents, student discipline was the responsibility of the University administration and government did not influence any decisions. There was a well-developed infrastructure in the constituent colleges, which assisted in the area of student discipline. The Student Representative Council, personal tutors, student advisors, the College Disciplinary Committee and the Dean of Students, all assisted in student discipline issues.

The questionnaire respondents suggested that legally, government did not have the authority to intervene in entry standards of the students, student selection and admission, pass or failure rates and discipline of students. The respondents felt that in practice, government never exerted significant influence on entry standards and pass or fail rates. However, they thought there was some government influence on student selection and admission and student discipline. The respondents argued that it was an indirect interference through government's inadequate funding to the University.

5.9 Overall Government Intervention in Mission of UNIMA

The last question of the questionnaire required the respondents to assess the perception of the extent of government's intervention in the mission of UNIMA. The

questionnaire specified *five* perceptions: *insufficient, not unreasonable, slightly excessive, somewhat excessive* and *excessive in the extreme*. The summarized results are shown in Figure 5.12.

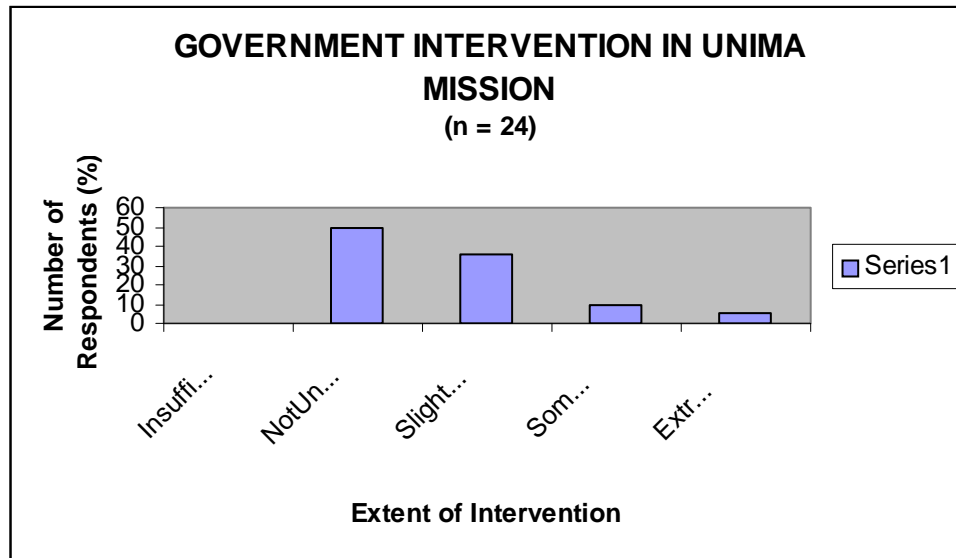


Figure 5.12: Perception of Intervention by Government in UNIMA Mission

The chart shows that out of the 24 respondents who completed the questionnaire, no one felt that Government intervention in the mission of UNIMA was insufficient. Given that UNIMA was a public university, 50% of the respondents indicated that the intervention by Government was not unreasonable. Thirty-six percent felt that the intervention was slightly excessive, while nine per cent reported somewhat excessive and five percent thought it was excessive in the extreme.

Generally, all the respondents felt that government intervened in the mission of UNIMA. Based on what was discussed before, this intervention was mostly indirect through the power of the purse. Limited and erratic funding to UNIMA was seen to affect quality of teaching and research. Where Government funded the research, more strings in control of data and publication affected “the dissemination, promotion and

preservation of learning responsive to the needs of Malawi and the world,” as specified in the mission statement.

5.10 Examination of External Influence on UNIMA Autonomy

The source of research findings reported so far was from within the University. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the University of Malawi did not operate in isolation; there were other stakeholders outside the University boundaries who influenced the operations of UNIMA and therefore its autonomy. In Figure 4.5, the stakeholders were identified as the regulatory bodies, the politicians, the other universities and the government. The role of government as a stakeholder was discussed earlier. In this section, the role of the regulatory bodies, the politicians, and the other universities will be discussed.

5.10.1 The Regulatory Bodies

There were several regulatory bodies that interacted with UNIMA. The four that were interviewed were connected with four of the five constituent colleges of UNIMA. The Law Association of Malawi regulated the Law Programme in the School of Law at Chancellor College; the Board of Engineers regulated the Engineering Programme at the Polytechnic; the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi regulated the Nursing Programme at the College of Nursing and Medical Council of Malawi regulated the standards of the Medical Programme at the College of Medicine. Each regulatory body will be described separately.

5.10.1.1 The Law Society of Malawi

The Law Society of Malawi regulated the programmes offered by the Law School in the Faculty of Law at Chancellor College. The school offered programmes,

which led to degrees in Law. The Law Society of Malawi was established under an Act of Parliament – The Legal Education and Legal Practitioners Act. In Malawi, a legal practitioner was one who had been admitted to practice and all those who had been admitted became members of the Law Society of Malawi.

The secretariat of the Law Society kept a list of all members who were legal practitioners in Malawi. New members were added to the list upon their admission to the practice and became subject to the rules that governed the Law Society of Malawi and all its members. Every year, the legal practitioners applied for the renewal of a license to practice, which was issued by the Registrar of the High Court of Malawi, upon a member's clearance from the Legal Society that the person had no outstanding issues with the Law Society.

Depending on the seriousness of an offence, a legal practitioner who was guilty of fraudulent or improper conduct in the discharge of his/her professional duty had his/her name struck off the *Roll*. Such a person was not allowed to practice the profession in Malawi. An official from the Law Society of Malawi explained how a legal practitioner was taken off the list:

There is a disciplinary committee of the Law Society of Malawi, which handles any misconduct. The issue will normally be referred to that committee and if the committee decides that the lawyer is guilty of misconduct, they can bring him before the Chief Justice in respect of the misconduct and after hearing the evidence that is there against the lawyer's misconduct and also after hearing from the lawyer himself, the Chief Justice could disbar a lawyer. When a lawyer is disbarred, he is taken off the list. When a lawyer has been disbarred, it is difficult to come back to practice. (*ExtInterview 17*)

There was a close relationship between the Law Society of Malawi and UNIMA through the Faculty of Law at Chancellor College. In Malawi, most of the Lawyers were graduates who did their law training from the Law School at Chancellor College.

The duration of the training was normally four years and the students attended a pre-law year in Chancellor College or other constituent colleges in the University of Malawi. Upon being awarded the law degree, the graduates applied before the Chief Justice in the High Court of Malawi for admission to practice.

The officials from the Law Society of Malawi explained the involvement of the Legal Society in the training of lawyers:

The Legal Education and Legal Practitioners Act has established a Council that is called the Council for Legal Education. Now, an elected member, who serves on the Council for Legal Education, represents the Law Society of Malawi on the Council. The Council for Legal Education sits down with the University in setting the curriculum for legal studies in Malawi. In the curriculum, there is a practical element and for every holiday the students take, they are attached to law firms. This helps them to gain a practical approach to the law. (*ExtInterview 17*)

The Council for Legal Education ensured that the curriculum that was developed for the Law students fit in with the requirements of the law practice in Malawi. The elected member on Council was normally a lawyer in private practice, who knew what requirements a legal practitioner must comply with and what clients expected of a lawyer.

The Law Society of Malawi worked closely with the Law School at Chancellor College in the Law curriculum in terms of recommendations for removal and/or addition.

Chancellor College is in very close contact with the Law Society of Malawi, such that they [the Law School] would not normally begin to make any changes to the curriculum, without involving the Society. In a recent strategic planning exercise for the Faculty of Law, the School made sure that the Society was extensively involved to ensure that the law graduates that come out of Chancellor College fit in with the experience of the Law Society of Malawi. (*ExtInterview 17*)

As a result of this collaboration, Chancellor College knew what the legal profession expected in terms of the quality of the law graduates coming out of Chancellor College. They were able to adjust if they were slackening and that helped in raising the quality of Law graduates from Chancellor College.

In terms of the autonomy of UNIMA, the Law Society of Malawi did not interfere. As pointed out by the official from the Law Society of Malawi:

All that the Society has done is to give direction to the Law School, and we do not interfere in the internal arrangement of the Law Faculty. Obviously, we have no say in who graduates; that is the decision made by the Faculty of Law. The Society would only comment if it became necessary on whether we thought, for example, that the quality of graduates was coming down. We definitely do not interfere with the running of the Law School. (*ExtInterview 17*)

In summary, the Law School trained the lawyers at Chancellor College but for the lawyers to practice, they had to be registered by the Law Society of Malawi, after satisfying the established conditions. The Law curriculum at Chancellor College was scrutinized by the Law Society to ensure that it contained the practical elements needed for a legal practitioner in Malawi. The autonomy of the Law School, in terms of the curriculum, was therefore limited by the registration requirements of the Law Society.

5.10.1.2 The Board of Engineers

The Board of Engineers regulated the programmes offered by the Engineering Department in the Faculty of Engineering at the Polytechnic. The department offered programmes, which led to degrees and diplomas in Engineering. As outlined in Chapter 4, the responsibilities of the Board of Engineers included the regulation of the qualification requirements and the practice of engineers in Malawi. To respond to the engineering needs of the country, the Board was empowered by interacting with the

various stakeholders in the engineering field to ensure that any developments were not overlooked.

The Board of Engineers was the sole body that registered qualified engineers to practice in Malawi. The engineers were registered at four levels; the highest was the professional level, which was a group of registered engineers. The next level was the graduate engineers, which was essentially a training level, as the graduate engineers went through some training and practical experience before they wrote their professional examination to become registered engineers. The other two levels the Board registered were technician and engineering technician levels.

The Board of Engineers played a very important role in the training of graduate engineers at the Polytechnic. One of the Board members explained this role:

UNIMA degree gets examined from time to time to see that it is of the accepted standard. The academic contents - the curriculum and syllabi - of the degree are examined regularly by the Board through the Dean of Engineering, who is a member of the Board. The Dean and Board members compare notes and agree on what the courses should contain. The Board is given the chance to comment on the content if adjustments are necessary in the new curriculum. Once the Board has accepted the UNIMA degree on paper, any changes would necessarily have to come back to the Board to be reviewed again. (*Interview 11*)

The consultation between the Board and the Polytechnic was an on-going activity.

The Board's advice was not limited to the Polytechnic alone. A Board member cited, as an example, a discussion with one of the constituent colleges who approached the Board when they were planning to introduce a new degree programme:

Only recently, the Board was approached by Chancellor College, the Department of Chemistry, who are in the process of developing a Chemical Engineering degree. The Chemistry Department is a theoretical department and needed direction from the Board. After some interviews, the Board gave them the advice on the content and the requirements that would facilitate the degree holders to be allowed to practice in Malawi. So the Board will examine the

syllabus when it is finalized before they [Chancellor College] can start the new degree programme. (*Interview 11*)

According to the interview data, a registered engineer was removed from practice if he/she breached the engineers' code of conduct. The Board had a summarized code of conduct document, which prescribed all the expectations of an engineers' practice, highlighting, among other things, the responsibility of engineers to fellow engineers and to the society at large. The document also spelled out the penalties. Through the Disciplinary Committee of the Board, any serious breaches of the code of conduct were discussed and a report was made to the Board. Serious investigations, at times involving lawyers, resulted in the removal of certain names from the register.

The Board member emphasized the importance of the Board of Engineers in Malawi in offering direction:

We do have some influence by offering direction to follow. If they decide not to follow the advice, they cannot practice in Malawi. The Law regulates the practice of engineering in Malawi and one can only be a practice engineer if he/she possesses the qualification and the experienced acceptable by the Board. So an institution that fails to comply with the Boards' wishes risks awarding useless degrees. It is not a voluntary thing; this is a legal requirement that all practice engineers in Malawi must meet the minimum requirements to practice. (*ExtInterview 11*)

As a regulatory body for engineers, failure to follow the direction as suggested by the Board resulted in an engineer's failure to practice in Malawi, as he/she would not be registered.

The Board of Engineers did not interfere with the autonomy of UNIMA to operate. The Board felt that the operation of the two institutions was a complementary relationship. The Board member observed:

I do not think the University can complain that we dictate something to them that they do not understand. Anything that we have commented upon has been

discussed with the Dean of Engineering who represents the University at the Board. We have always come to the same understanding. It is the responsibility of the Board to advise or warn the University of any actions that might affect their product, the graduate. They could easily ignore the Board's requirements and find out that their products are not performing as expected. But that will also go against one of the objectives at the University, which is to serve industry. So, I see the University working hand in hand with the Board, and there can be no interference. (*ExtInterview 11*)

It was clear that the University had freedom to operate as it wished but in case it awarded 'useless' engineering degrees, the Polytechnic incorporated advice from the Board of Engineers. The autonomy of UNIMA in academic matters was limited as the Board of Engineers exerted some influence in the engineering curriculum at the Polytechnic.

5.10.1.3 The Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi

Established in 1966, the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi regulated the programmes offered by the College of Nursing, in the Faculty of Nursing at the Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN). The College offered programmes, which led to degrees and diplomas in Nursing.

The Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi was a regulatory body for the nursing and midwifery profession in education and training practice and professional conduct. As mentioned in Chapter 4, two of the functions of the Nurses and the Midwives Council, according to the Act (1995), were:

To control and exercise authority affecting the education, training and practice of persons in, and the performance of, the practices pursued by nurses and nurse technicians; and to exercise disciplinary control over the professional conduct of all persons registered under this Act and practising in Malawi. (*Nurses and Midwives Act, 1995, pp. 10-11*)

A senior officer at the Council summarized its role:

Our role is to ensure quality of health services through nursing and midwifery services and we do that first through education and training. We regulate nurses and midwifery training by providing standards, so we stipulate standards that must be followed and through those standards we provide a syllabi to all training institutions. Whosoever wants to run a nurses' programme must first of all apply for syllabus from the Council. The Council provides a syllabus and the institution develops a curriculum based on the syllabi provided. In this connection, we provide the minimum standards of the syllabus required in all the programmes offered at KCN and then the College develops the curriculum for each of the programmes. (*ExtInterview 2*)

The regulation of standards of nursing training, which was the major activity at KCN, was the major activity of the Nurses Council of Malawi, so that KCN graduated a 'safe' nurse.

Requested to expand on the Council's involvement in the training of a 'safe' nurse, the Council official commented:

Having included the entry qualifications for the nursing programme, we register the students, a process called *indexing*. We index a student to give that student a mandate to practice; to be able to touch a patient. An indexed student is followed as he/she goes through the programme. We go for supervisory visits and during the supervision, we check whether indeed the colleges are still observing what the Council has set. Do they have enough resources in the library? Is the students' welfare taken care of? Do they have adequate staff at the required levels? We are mandated to close any school that does not perform to the required level. (*ExtInterview 2*)

In addition to passing the academic examination, the students wrote the Council's licensure examination and the successful candidates were licenced to practice and provide the needed care to patients. According to the official from the Nurses Council, KCN followed the standards stipulated by the Nurses Council and the graduates from KCN practiced their nursing in compliance with the Council regulations.

The standards for nurses' practice were the responsibility of the Monitoring and Evaluation department of the Council. The Investigation Department was responsible for complaints by the general public on the type of care they received. The Disciplinary Committee, which was the Council's court, processed serious complaints. The seriousness of the offence resulted in the deletion from the nurses' register and the person never practiced again in Malawi.

The attitude of KCN towards the Nurses Council was not cordial at first. It seemed as though the Council blocked certain innovations that KCN wanted to implement. The decision to employ graduates at the secretariat raised the status of the Council and improved the relations between the two institutions. Council became proactive instead of being reactive to situations. Asked to comment on the relationship between the two institutions, the Council official stated:

What I have noticed is that Council and KCN consult each other regularly and there is direct consultation between the two institutions, sometimes without following the established communication channels. I should think the attitude should be better than before. KCN is very supportive and appreciative of the services rendered by the Council to them. (*ExtInterview 2*)

The Nurses Council functioned closely with KCN, and this was confirmed by a respondent from the Council:

In case of KCN, once we have provided them with the syllabus, we also specify who can be acceptable to train as a nurse and what subjects to be covered. We also specify the qualification of those who are supposed to teach the particular subjects. Our objective is to have a competent nurse. As a regulatory body, we are concerned with safety of the patient. (*ExtInterview 2*)

The expectations from the Nurses Council were then incorporated into the KCN syllabus. The Nurses Council provided the minimum standards required for subject

content; KCN had the freedom to expand it to include its other values that were deemed important for a university graduate nurse.

KCN had freedom to operate without interference from the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi. An official from the Council clarified a misconception that existed between KCN and the Council:

There used to be lack of understanding of the limits of each other. KCN would think that they could not run any other programmes that the Council did not have the syllabi for. Equally, the Council would react by inquiring why KCN would start a programme without the knowledge of the Council. However, the reality is that as University of Malawi, its College of Nursing can come up with any programme and find out what they need to beef-up the programme from the Nurses Council. They [Council] will then look at the programme and advise accordingly. Thus there will be no restrictions. ... The colleges can come up with a programme and our work is like that of a watchdog – asking why certain things are done, advising what can and cannot be done, what is safe and is not safe. We just need to understand and advise. Basically Nurses Council is not supposed to restrict the College. (*ExtInterview 2*)

In summary, the relationship between the Nurses Council of Malawi and KCN was characterized as cordial. The Council did not interfere with the operations of the College; it advised when there was an anomaly. “At the end of the day we leave them to operate the way they want to operate. If they contravene any set standards we come in and close the institution” (*ExtInterview 2*). The College of Nursing had the autonomy to operate in the way it wanted. However, because it needed to meet the minimum standards set by the Nurses and Midwifery Council of Malawi, it had some limitations on its autonomy in the curriculum of the programmes it offered.

5.10.1.4 The Medical Council of Malawi

Established by the Act of Parliament in 1988, the Medical Council of Malawi regulated the programmes offered by the Medical School in the Faculty of Medicine at

the College of Medicine. The College offered programmes, which led to Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS). The Council was responsible for regulating the training of the persons, their practice and promotion of standards in the medical profession.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, three of the functions of the Medical Council of Malawi, according to the Act (1987), were:

To control and to exercise authority affecting the training of persons in, and the performance of practices pursued in connection with, the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of physical or mental defects, illnesses or deficiencies in human beings; to exercise disciplinary control over professional conduct of all persons registered under this Act and practising in Malawi; to promote liaison in the field of medical training both in Malawi and elsewhere, and to promote the standards of such training in Malawi. (*Medical Council of Malawi Act, 1987, p. 8*)

According to a respondent, the Medical Council of Malawi was established:

To protect the general public from unscrupulous medical practitioners through the registration of all medical personnel, including doctors, clinical officers, medical assistants, laboratory technicians, radiographers and so many other cadres, that were not registered by the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi and Pharmacy and Medicine Poisons Board. (*ExtInterview 1*)

The Medical Council of Malawi Act empowered the Council to regulate the training of all health personnel in Malawi and the College of Medicine had a programme, the MBBS degree, with a mandate to training doctors. The College ensured that any programme they introduced was approved by the Council, which, at the time of the study, had 13 members, 11 of whom were medical doctors in various practices in Malawi. A respondent explained the Council's role:

The curriculum or syllabus that has been approved by the University is sent to Medical Council of Malawi for vetting, to ensure that the final product of College of Medicine will be a doctor that we are going to register. If we did not have a chance to comment on the curriculum, then we would not know the type of doctor we would be registering. If necessary, Council will advise for revision

and /or additions. If it [Council] is not happy, the course will not be accepted; otherwise the course will go ahead and when they graduate, we will register them. (*ExtInterview 1*)

The official further clarified the role of Medical Council in the curriculum approval process. Rather than imposing their wishes on the College of Medicine, Council acknowledged the expertise at the Medical School and only provided advice:

College of Medicine is a training institution and as such, they are experts in their field as educators. But what we do is that in the approval process, the Board might observe that there are just one or two things that need to be included, in order to add value. The aim is not to shoot it [curriculum] down and say that is the end of it. The point is to add value so a doctor should be complete in all aspects. If there are any areas, which are loose, Council becomes interested. (*ExtInterview 1*)

The College of Medicine was expected to comply with the recommendations of the Council. Failure to do as requested meant that Council would not recognize the newly qualified graduate doctors and therefore would not be registered. The respondent from the Council re-iterated the registration issue:

If College of Medicine says we will proceed when we have recommended not to proceed, they will do so but we will not recognize them which means they will not practice anywhere in Malawi. We have situations where some doctors were trained outside Malawi, brought their qualifications from where they were and we have not accepted their qualifications. We have told them that they cannot work here in Malawi with their papers because the Medical Council deemed the qualifications unsatisfactory. (*ExtInterview 1*)

The working relationship between the Medical Council of Malawi and College of Medicine was characterized as cordial. It was viewed as symbiotic, as each institution needed the other. As one of the members of the Council was a professor at the College of Medicine, this person facilitated a direct input of issues from the College and communicated the views of Council to the College.

Even though the medical profession was highly regulated, the Medical Council felt that they did not interfere with the running of the College. A senior official described the regulation process of the Council:

We visit hospitals and clinics every year and we are also mandated to visit training institutions. During our visits, we look at the minimum standards in the training institutions, for example, to train a doctor you need a standard student-to-professor ratio, up-to-date laboratories, training materials, up-to-date books and recent journals, and so on. Our job is to advise, and College of Medicine implements the recommendations. (*ExtInterview 1*)

In *summary*, the Medical Council of Malawi did not impose itself on the curriculum design of the programmes offered at the College of Medicine. However, the College's freedom was limited by the need for graduate medical doctors to be recognized for practice in Malawi. The College of Medicine incorporated the advice from the Medical Council of Malawi.

5.10.2 Political Influence

Political interference in the affairs of UNIMA was prevalent in Malawi during the one party rule. Most respondents reported a change in attitude on political matters by government since 1994. In this section, *political influence* will be discussed under three topics: political appointments to Council, Parliamentary Committee on Education and funding to UNIMA.

5.10.2.1 Political Appointments to Council

Despite the change to multi-party politics in Malawi in 1994, there were still some pockets of resistance to change. Just as there were some politics of appeasement in appointing political figures to Council in the period prior to 1994, the practice seemed to have continued in the new era, post-1994, albeit not to the same extent.

An interview with one of the government officials expressed the political sentiments when appointing members of the University Council:

Like the past Council, we had certain people who had big positions in the ruling party as members of Council; so they were representing the party and when they speak, people listened because they were a party. The Council members should be appointed on merit because of what they can do to assist the institution progress further. However, if one is appointed along party lines and becomes too powerful, people tend to keep quiet and fail to question certain issues for fear of repercussions. In Malawi, the feeling that somebody is closer to the Head of State becomes an issue...The major determining factor in determining success of Africa's institutions is to leave politics out of management. (*ExtInterview 7*)

This development seriously affected the freedom of speech for those members on University Council, as they would not freely express their ideas, in case they were misquoted by someone who was very close to the Head of State, who happened to also be the Chancellor of the University.

Commenting on the behaviour of some political appointments, one senior University Office respondent stated:

...for various reasons, the political appointees, those who were representing the government from the political side, will initially come, and attend the first few meetings, make a lot of noise by virtue of their political positions, after which they stop attending meetings and fall out. (*Interview 3*)

The feeling of the other Council members was that maybe the level of deliberations was too advanced for some of these appointees.

Despite this view from some respondents, others thought that such political appointments, if made in true faith, were beneficial to the running of the University because of their connections with the incumbent ruling party elite. A senior officer from the University Office observed:

What is important is that when you are running a university, you must have a Council, which is politically strong. You must have members of Council who have direct access to political decision-makers. We had people in Council who

were politically strong and had connections direct to the President [also the Chancellor] and other Ministers; and a decision would be made by Council and says...“we will clear this up” and then you would see the results...When you have people with no political connections, you find it very difficult to run an institution like the UNIMA. Thus, I am afraid politics has to come in; these people make things move. (*Interview 16*)

It was clearly a question of a balancing act as to which politicians to include in Council and which ones to exclude. It was hoped that those included did not inhibit deliberations and at the same time accomplished a lot for the University through their high-powered political contacts.

5.10.2.2 Funding to UNIMA

As was mentioned earlier, government funding to UNIMA was inadequate and government needed to find ways of increasing the funding. The politicians had some comments in this area. One Member of Parliament observed:

I think the Ministry and UNIMA will have to come up with a much better solution as to how the University should run. Financially, UNIMA is not running properly now. Starting from equipment, dormitories, acquisition of teaching materials, libraries – books and journals, etc, all these are seriously below standard. This is all a result of poor funding. (*ExtInterview 16*)

One way the University could raise funds was through the introduction of *economic fees*. Commenting on the issue of tuition fees, one respondent stated that “when discussing the issue of tuition fees in Malawi, its worth noting that this is a political non-starter and is based on the mindset that Malawians are poor and are not able to pay fees” (*Interview 5*).

A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the respondents who recalled being informed that “introducing fees would make the ruling party unpopular and this would result in loss of votes during an election” (*Interview 20*). The rhetoric from the

politicians, according to the University level respondents, seemed to suggest that government did not want UNIMA to create an impression that it [government] was failing to run the University: “As such, the feeling was that the University should not make policies that would make the government unpopular” (*Interview 5*).

However, this was not a consensus line of thought from all the politicians. Some had different views and thought these were unfortunate statements. A former government minister commented:

Sadly, the likely loss of votes during an election is the truth. There is great fear on the part of the politicians that if you introduce fee paying completely to the university, no politician would be favored at all in this country. It is true, whichever party comes into power, they will try to resist it; and I think for a good reason because they will be alienating some 80% of the people of their vote; people will not vote for them. (*ExtInterview 16*)

Commenting on the way forward, the politician who supported the introduction of tuition fees, suggested introducing the tuition fees slowly over a period of time and not at one go. He further recommended making the argument as open as possible in order to bring in other political parties, who, he thought, would likely agree with the commercialization of the University.

Another politician viewed the situation in terms of changing times:

Looking at life today, things are changing. We cannot run the University as it was run in the 1970s, when the economy was small and was performing very well. We could then afford free things but now we simply have to respond to the changing times. Some politicians think that if we ask students to pay for their university education, they will be unpopular. We cannot bring politics in very important matters like education, which is life-blood of any nation otherwise Malawi will not develop. (*ExtInterview 13*)

Despite Malawi being branded ‘a poor country’ and expecting free services from government, one politician cited, as an example, what some Malawians had achieved:

I really do not know for how long we shall give free services. Malawi is a poor country but if you look around you see that certain people can afford paying fees for their children to private institutions at both primary and secondary school levels as well as at Kamuzu Academy and St Andrews. These are very expensive private institutions in Malawi. Now, if government can introduce commercial fees for those who can afford and reasonable fees for those who can get bursaries or loans so that they would repay at the end of their training, I think that would be a good alternative. But really it is high time the University looked at ways of making money. (*ExtInterview 13*)

Clearly, the general thinking by the politicians was that UNIMA was poorly funded and that there was need for a concerted effort by all stakeholders: the University, the government, the politicians and the general public, to improve the financial situation. The thinking was to open up the education system to everyone who could afford to pay. Those who could not afford were to be assisted through bursaries or loans. As stated by one respondent: “insisting on what used to happen so many years ago is refusing to develop” (*ExtInterview 13*).

5.10.2.3 Parliamentary Committee on Education

This was one of the parliamentary committees set up to oversee the education sector. It acted as a liaison between UNIMA and government, sensitizing the other parliamentarians on the problems in the education sector, and in particular, the overriding issue for UNIMA was inadequate funding and its consequences.

One respondent recalled a conversation between UNIMA officials and the Parliamentary Committee on Education on the need to increase tuition fees in response to which one Member of Parliament was quoted as saying:

That is not your university. You cannot run it the way you want. We must know what you want to do before you start implementing the increase in fees. Do you know that you can put us into trouble? The University is owned by the taxpayer and Members of Parliament are answerable. Government is likely to be unpopular if you raise fees. Therefore, you should consult the taxpayer before

you initiate any changes and this means that anything you do must go through government. You can only proceed if government agrees. (*Interview 5*)

The sentiment in this quotation resonated with the fear of losing votes as mentioned earlier. The need to consult the taxpayer also aligned with government's expectation for UNIMA to consult it before introducing any fees.

Apart from the funding issues, the respondents felt that there was nothing the politicians could do in terms of the curriculum. As professionals, it was up to UNIMA to decide what to do. A Member of Parliament recounted:

I was reading in one of the papers that UNIMA intends to start offering Pharmacy degrees. That is a step forward. Now, if the University needs funding for specific items in the programme, it will be up to the Parliamentary Committee to see how important that particular programme is and advise government to assist. But for us to go there and tell them what programmes to start offering would be out of our mandate. (*ExtInterview 13*)

While agreeing that it was a relatively new committee, (at the time of the study, the committee had served two years of a five year mandate), it only influenced decisions in funding and had nothing to do with the other areas of UNIMA's autonomy. The members felt that they were there to assist UNIMA move towards financial autonomy.

5.10.3 Influence of Other Universities

In the discussion on universities in Malawi in Chapter 4, an outline of four of the universities in Malawi at the time of the study was shown in Table 4.1. The two public universities recognized by government were the University of Malawi (UNIMA) and the Mzuzu University (MZUNI).

As mentioned before, the University of Malawi was established in 1965 and for 30 years, was the only institution of higher learning in the country. Since 1994, with the ushering in of the multiparty era, the education landscape in Malawi had changed. A second public university, Mzuzu University, was established in 1998. Since then there

had been a proliferation of private universities, which, at the time of the study, were in the process of being recognized. In this section, the influence of MZUNI on the autonomy of UNIMA will be discussed.

MZUNI was established by an Act of Parliament in May 1997 and admitted its first students in January 1998. The mission of the University was “to provide high quality education, training, research and complementary services to meet the technological, social and economic needs of individuals and communities in Malawi” (*University Documents, 2005*). Like UNIMA, the “Council is the governing body of the University and is responsible for the management and administration of the University and its property and revenues, and exercises general control and supervision of the overall affairs of the University (*University Documents, 2005*).

The establishment of the second public university in Malawi was a welcome development for the government. A senior government official from Ministry of Education pointed out:

It is not a problem for the government; we can even have three or four. Each university has its own mandate, and it knows what has to do. Its budget and its relationship with the Ministry is dependent on the mandate that it has. In fact, we are happy to have two because this encourages them to look at each other and compete and that gives the Ministry a leeway. (*ExtInterview 6*)

MZUNI operated independently from UNIMA, with its own mandate and budget. The senior government official had the opinion that the MZUNI operated better than UNIMA in a number of areas:

MZUNI is doing quite well. It is leading in terms of financial management and sourcing funds. It started with a policy of making sure that students realize that the education they were to undergo was theirs; so they had to pay for it. Also it is closer to the people than the UNIMA, in the sense that there are programmes which are sensitive to the needs of the people. It is also an institution which is leading other institutions in the area of capacity building. It hasn't limited itself

to only the awarding of degrees, but it is also looking at the other levels. They have taken the area of information technology seriously and have embraced it very well. The UPIC Project assisted them and they are doing well. (*ExtInterview 6*)

Commenting on the funded budget to MZUNI, another senior government official stated:

With MZUNI, once the budget is approved, say MK500 million, you can be rest assured that they will live within that budget, even though what they originally submitted would be much more. UNIMA, on the other hand, a budget is merely a document for them to solicit financing from government. What eventually turns out is usually not in line with their initial submission, let alone what budget has been approved. That is the major problem. (*ExtInterview 8*)

One senior official from MZUNI echoed these observations:

From the outset, MZUNI has tried to look at the needs of the country. We initially carried out a needs assessment to see which were the priority areas. We do not duplicate what is offered in UNIMA. However, there are certain areas which we need to contribute as a university, like the field of education. As you know, the education sector in Malawi has a shortfall of 10,000 teachers, and the teacher training institutions [UNIMA and Domasi College of Education] have a small output of teachers. So, by also focussing on education, we are complementing the two institutions. By and large, the programmes we have here have a direct impact on the development of the country; so education is one of them. The others are programmes in environment and information technology. (*ExtInterview 4*)

Some respondents from UNIMA recognized the developments at MZUNI and observed that, even though it had been operating for less than 10 years, it had set its priorities right and agreed with government officials in the area of funding. A senior official from one of the colleges observed:

Mzuzu University came up much later than University of Malawi and was set up slightly differently in a way that encouraged them to raise funds from outside the government. So they would be much more in a position to exercise a little more independence depending on how successful they were in raising these funds independent of government funding, which included the charging high levels and differential levels of fees. University of Malawi is coming in now but to some extent if you look at the University of Malawi Act, it doesn't give us that

same level autonomy to raise funds outside the super government structure. So somehow that is a limitation. (*Interview 11*)

These respondents felt that, to some extent, MZUNI had more autonomy to function with minimum constraints than had UNIMA. The administrative machinery at MZUNI used UNIMA as a case example and tried not to fall into a similar trap of being too dependent on government funding.

The most urgent problem at UNIMA was financial autonomy. The management of MZUNI recognized the importance of financial self-sufficiency. One senior official from the MZUNI commented:

We are the first national university to come up with the cost-sharing mechanism, where students are expected to contribute to their education. In the Malawi situation, it was odd to have to see university demanding tuition from students and from that perspective, I guess that is why we were thought to be a private university. We have been a public [national] university from the start. (*ExtInterview 4*)

The issue of cost-sharing was echoed by a senior government official:

MZUNI, luckily enough, started with a higher contribution fee so they did not exert pressure on government subvention. If anything, we are just complementing them. But now, what is happening is that there is also a lot of demand for courses at the University of Mzuzu that they are offering. Now, the pressure is mounting that they have to hire a lot more lecturers; we have to buy teaching and learning materials. (*ExtInterview 8*)

As far as the government was concerned, there was no difference in the funding pattern between UNIMA and MZUNI. However, it was noted that UNIMA charged a lower contribution fee of MK25,000 per student while MZUNI charged a higher figure of MK55,000. According to 2004 UNIMA figures, with 5427 students each contributing the MK55,000 as MZUNI instead of the MK25,000, UNIMA would have contributed MK162.81 million to its budget from financial contribution alone. This challenged

UNIMA to justify a lower contribution fee, which resulted in missing out on the chance to raise nearly MK163 million towards its yearly budget.

It was also noted by MZUNI, just as in the case of UNIMA, that the issue of charging fees in a public university had political undertones, and that limited the level of the fees charged. One senior administrator at MZUNI commented:

We have the powers, vested in Council by the Act, to raise fees. Council has agreed to continuously review the fees upwards in relation to inflation. But it is not easy; it is very difficult. For example, at UNIMA, whatever proposal is submitted for the revision of fees is detested, maybe on political grounds. Much as you may wish to raise the fees, there are these other forces. It does not say anywhere that we need permission from the Ministry [government] for approval; but somehow, we find ourselves wanting to ask the Ministry for permission. So, it is not working well. (*ExtInterview 5*)

From the interview data, it was clear that the two universities had a lot in common. The similarities included: Council as the governing body of the University, government as the main source of funding, student recruitment tied to bed-space, programme quality assurance through external examiners, and government being the source of student loan funds. Despite these similarities, MZUNI did not exert pressure on UNIMA. Commenting on the exertion of pressure, a senior official from MZUNI stated:

In my opinion, not specifically that I can talk of. But we are increasingly seeing the members of staff from UNIMA wanting to move to Mzuzu University. Maybe they see something that we don't see ourselves and increasingly, we are having students who transfer from UNIMA to MZUNI. We have our own salary structure, which is slightly better than UNIMA, which could be one of the reasons for their move. But being two public universities, we see how the others are fairing and learn from each other's successes and failures. We do talk and collaborate; we have taken the initiative and have a committee of Vice Chancellors to address issues of common interest. (*ExtInterview 4*)

Without necessarily exerting pressure on UNIMA, there was a general feeling among most respondents in the study that, at the time of the study, MZUNI was

managing its affairs better than UNIMA. According to two senior MZUNI officials, the MZUNI success story was attributed to several factors:

First, the programmes we introduce at MZUNI are those we feel have direct impact on the social, economic development of this country. *Second*, we emphasize self-reliance. Much as we depend on government subvention, we have a target for income generation ourselves. *Third*, small is beautiful; we are pro-active; we respond to the needs of the country and take minimum time to arrive at decisions. *Fourth*, we have developed a sense of ownership of the university: management, lecturers and students feel they own the university and therefore put as much effort as possible towards its success. Staff have a mindset of being part and parcel of the university, taking responsibility for its successes and failures. In that way, we have a team of motivated staff, who want to see this institution develop. (ExtInterview 4)

This MZUNI *success story* might put pressure on the University Office at UNIMA to revisit the proposal that the constituent colleges of UNIMA be developed into full University units. The universities would then be re-structured to function as MZUNI. This might be looked at as an indirect influence on the influence on autonomy of UNIMA.

5.10. 4 Summary

In this section, the findings that influenced the autonomy of UNIMA outside the university boundaries: regulatory bodies, the politicians and the establishment of other universities, were discussed.

5.10.4.1 Regulatory Bodies

Four regulatory bodies were interviewed: the Law Society of Malawi for Chancellor College, the Board of Engineers for the Polytechnic, the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi for College of Nursing and the Medical Council of Malawi for the College of Medicine. The regulatory bodies advised the respective colleges in the curriculum they had to follow if they wished their graduates to be recognized. Each graduate had to

write a professional examination to become a professional, who was then registered by the regulatory body and allowed to practice in Malawi. The professionals were expected to follow the stipulated code of ethics and professional conduct.

The regulatory bodies exerted authority in the curriculum of the programmes offered by the respective departments in the constituent colleges. Failure to amend the curriculum as suggested by the regulatory bodies led to the graduates being refused licence to practice their professions in Malawi. The regulatory bodies did not interfere in the other areas of institutional autonomy.

5.10.4.2 Political Influence

The appointment of politicians to serve on the University Council either inhibited free-flow of Council's deliberations or assisted in having high-powered political contacts that pushed Council decisions to the right quarters for action. Being a public university, fully dependent on government for funding, members of parliament exerted their influence on UNIMA. Parliamentarians approved the UNIMA budget before its implementation.

The mood among the parliamentarians was for more government funding to UNIMA, and they encouraged UNIMA to find ways of generating own-funding and be less dependent on government. Whilst the fear of losing elections was a fact, the sentiments from the Parliamentary Committee on Education seemed to support the commercialization of the UNIMA. As this move was likely to harm a larger proportion of the students who came from poor families, the needy would be provided with bursaries and loans.

The politicians did exert some influence on UNIMA funding in that they influenced the machinery that approved the funding to the University. In this manner, the financial autonomy of UNIMA was limited. The politicians, however, did not interfere with other areas of autonomy, such as personnel affairs, academic affairs or student affairs.

5.10.4.3 Influence of Other Universities

Several universities mushroomed since 1994, but at the time of the study, government recognized only two universities: UNIMA and MZUNI. The Mzuzu University was, therefore, the only tertiary institution that exerted some influence on the UNIMA. MZUNI, like UNIMA, was a national university, which was fully-funded by government. Being a smaller university than UNIMA, respondents had the opinion that MZUNI was better managed than UNIMA, which seemed to be overstretched with the federal system of administration of the constituent colleges, especially with limited government funding.

According to the two respondents from MZUNI, the success of Mzuzu University was attributed to programmes, which had direct impact on social and economic development of Malawi, self-reliance, being proactive and a sense of ownership of the institution by MZUNI personnel. The debate to restructure the constituent colleges of UNIMA into independent universities was likely to resurface in certain quarters.

5.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the interview findings of the autonomy of UNIMA were presented from five perspectives, namely, government involvement in UNIMA affairs,

administrative and financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters. Interview data showed that because government was the major source of funding for the university, it [government] controlled with some of the decision making process in UNIMA, either directly or indirectly.

For almost 30 years, the UNIMA was the only institution of higher learning in Malawi until 1998, when a second university was established. In terms of structure, UNIMA had five constituent colleges, with a central administration responsible for coordinating the activities of the constituent college. The central office, popularly known as the University Office, was headed by a Vice Chancellor, who was the chief executive of the University, responsible for the day-to-day running of the University. Principals, who, under the supervision of the Vice-Chancellor, were responsible for the day-to-day running of the colleges, headed the constituent colleges. The University practiced a federal system of administration in the constituent colleges.

The governing body of UNIMA was the University Council, which was responsible for the management and administration of the University. The Vice-Chancellor and the college Principals were part of the policy making body, as they were also members of the University Council. The University Council determined the policies of the University, which were delegated to the Vice Chancellor for implementation. The constituent college principals were responsible for operationalizing the policies in the colleges.

The University of Malawi was a public university and was fully funded by the government. The government, through the Department of Statutory Corporations appointed the Council members. This raised questions as to the extent of the

University's autonomy in a number of areas. Government was likely to influence certain actions of the University. However, despite government's involvement in the selection of some Council members, its [government] influence was minimal, especially since 1994 and there was more freedom to discuss issues without any fear of repercussions.

A study on UNIMA by the Malawi Institute of Management in 1997 recommended, among other things, the decentralization of some of the University Office administrative activities to the constituent college administration. Even though this process had not yet been completed at the time of the study, the University Office played a supervisory role as the colleges took most of the administrative and academic decisions. The colleges had autonomy to decide under the guidelines set by the University Office. The colleges submitted regular reports to the University Office on their performance.

Similar to the analysis of Li (1998), the researcher developed a quantified rating scale to indicate the extent of government control and UNIMA's autonomy at different levels of the University. Based on information from the documentary reviews, the questionnaire results, verbatim through the interviews and researcher's own assessment, the ratings ranged from a highest score of "3" and a lowest score of "0." The researcher concurred with Li's ratings:

A rate of "3" indicated a high level control/autonomy [at] different levels; a rate of "2" indicated a flexible control or a medium degree of autonomy; a rating of "1" indicated a minimal amount of control/autonomy and a "0" indicated that a particular authority was not involved in this process. (pp. 91-92)

Table 5.4 shows the researcher's quantified weightings of government control, and university, college, and departmental autonomy in each of the five areas in the study:

Table 5.4***Control and Autonomy at Different Levels in UNIMA****

	Government (Control)	University (Autonomy)	College (Autonomy)	Department (Autonomy)
Government Involvement in:				
UNIMA Matters				
Council Members Appointment	3	0	0	0
Appointment of Chancellor		2	0	0
Govt. and UNIMA interaction	2	1	0	0
	2			
Administrative matters				
University Administration		3	0	0
College Administration	1	2	3	2
Collaboration with external institutions	0	1	2	3
	0			
Financial matters				
Funding Sources	2	1	1	1
Fund Raising	0	1	2	2
Sources of Extra Income	2	1	2	2
Personnel matters				
University Administration Recruits	1	3	1	0
College Administration Recruits	0	2	3	1
College Faculty Recruits	0	1	3	3
Promotions	0	2	3	3
Granting of Ranks	0	2	3	2
Academic matters				
Determination of Academic Disciplines	1	2	3	3
Textbook Selection	0	0	1	3
Quality of Programmes	1	2	3	3
Research and Publications	2	1	2	2
Student matters				
Student Admission	0	1	1	0
Student Discipline	0	3	3	2
External Influencers				
Regulatory Bodies	0	3	3	1
Political Influence and Appointments	3	0	0	0
Other Universities	1	0	0	0

Note: As a guide, 0 = no control/autonomy or not involved; 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high. Adapted from A Study of Institutional Autonomy in Selected Chinese Universities by Xin Li, 1998, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, p. 151.

government involvement UNIMA matters, administrative and financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, student matters and external influences. The scores had no mathematical or statistical significance. They were intended to show the levels of control and autonomy as conceptualized by the researcher.

5.11.1 Government Involvement in UNIMA Matters

Since UNIMA was classified as a statutory corporation under the Ministry of Education, government was involved in the selection of Council members through the Department of Statutory Corporations. The University had *no say* in who was to be its Council members. The appointment of politicians in Council was also the responsibility of government. In accordance with the composition of the Council, the University Act had provision for two members to be appointed by the Chancellor. The Head of State, who was also the Chancellor of the University, nominated members of [his] ruling party. The government in this case, had control over the nomination of a party member to be a Council member and the University was not consulted. The appointment of the Chancellor was the University's decision through the University Council but government, through the Chancellor, approved the appointment. The misinterpretation of the University Act (1998) clause "subsequent to the present Chancellor, the next Chancellor shall be appointed by the President ..." p. 262) was seen by others as a deliberate move by Council to maintain the status quo, so that they [Council] could have direct access to the government decision-making machinery. Regular meetings between government and the University were necessary for discussing and mapping the future direction of the University.

5.11.2 Administration Matters

The University Office was responsible for university administration and government involvement was quite limited through membership of Council. All the officers in the University Office executed their functions without government interference. The College administrators who reported to the University Office also experienced similar freedom. The University, through the Colleges, had high level of autonomy to determine which institution to collaborate with and government was only informed of the outcome.

5.11.3 Finance Matters

Being the only source of funding for UNIMA, government had considerable control of how much the University was funded. As government could not fully fund the University, Colleges and Departments played a part in fund-raising for the University. The fund-raising was centralized in the Colleges and Department, and income-generating activities included Parallel Programs, research, consultancies and short courses.

5.11.4 Personnel Matters

In personnel matters, government exerted some influence in the appointment of the Vice Chancellor since, as members of Council, government officials participated in the recruitment of the Vice Chancellor. The University Council, through the Appointments Committee, had full autonomy in the recruitment of the rest of the University Office personnel, including the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer, the University Internal Auditor and the College Principals. The recruitment of the college administrative officers, namely the

Vice-Principal, Registrar, Finance Officer Deans and Heads of Department, was decentralized to colleges. The College Appointments Committee also had full autonomy to recruit the best-qualified candidates. The recruitment of faculty members was also done at the college level and it was a joint exercise between the college and the departments in the recruitment of the best candidate. The University Office ratified those appointed to the various positions at the college level. The process was completely autonomous, independent of government influence.

Government had no influence on promotions in UNIMA. This activity, which had been decentralized to the colleges since 1998, was under the full autonomy of the constituent Colleges. The University Office administrators played the supervisory role. The promotion of the academicians was based on research, teaching effectiveness and community contribution while the promotion of the administrative staff was determined by their qualification, length of service and job performance. Staff were promoted following the established criteria, and no external influences were exerted. Similarly, the ranks were granted by the College Promotions Committee, using the established salary scales. Heads of Department had some input in the process through the recommendations to the Promotion Committee. The University Office supervised the entire process and Government did not play any role in the process.

5.11.5 Academic Matters

Government was not involved in the decisions in academic matters. The decision on academic disciplines was decentralized to colleges and departments, who through the Deans of Faculty, had to seek Senate approval before any new program was introduced. The University had full autonomy in the determination of textbooks and,

since 1994, the government, through the Censorship Board, had not interfered with any textbook titles that were recommended by the subject specialists.

The quality of academic programs was the responsibility of the University, with minimum interference from government as a result of funding. To ensure that the standards being achieved by UNIMA had recognition by other universities, external examiners were appointed to evaluate and moderate the university's work. The University had full autonomy in the appointment of external examiners, but government exerted some influence through the control of the purse in terms of where they came from.

Research and publication in the University were decentralized to the colleges and they had full autonomy to decide on the areas of research and had the freedom to approve research proposals seeking funding from foreign donors, without government interference. For government sponsored research, the National Research Council of Malawi prioritized the research areas and strictly controlled the research findings and their publication.

5.11.6 Student Matters

Students were admitted into UNIMA through two routes: the normal entry and the parallel program. For both routes, admission criteria were in place at the University Office, and the Pro-Vice Chancellor chaired the process, with membership from the constituent colleges. Candidates who fulfilled the criteria were selected. The University had full autonomy in the selection process and government had no direct involvement. With student discipline, the University had full autonomy in the disciplinary issues through the college committees. The University Office, through the Pro-Vice

Chancellor, took the supervisory role, while the colleges, through the Deans of Students, played a more direct role in maintaining student discipline in the constituent colleges.

5.11.7 Influence from External Factors

Three external factors, which influenced the autonomy of UNIMA: regulatory bodies, political influence and the role of other universities, were discussed. The regulatory bodies played an important role in the quality of UNIMA graduates as they were legally instituted to maintain standards in the various professions such as lawyers, engineers, nurses and medical doctors. The regulatory bodies registered all the graduates who became professionals after passing the professional examinations. The bodies worked in collaboration with the constituent colleges to ensure acceptable curriculum and the departments implemented the recommendations. The regulatory bodies limited the academic autonomy of UNIMA based largely upon their requirements for membership from the respective UNIMA constituent colleges.

Being a national university, political appointments were inevitable. The appointment of politicians in Council was the responsibility of government. In accordance with the composition of the Council, the University Act had a provision for two members to be appointed by the Chancellor. The Head of State, who was also the Chancellor of the University, nominated members of [his] ruling party. The government in this case had the autonomy to nominate a party member to be a Council member and the University was not consulted. In addition, the Members of Parliament approved the UNIMA budget and therefore influenced in the funding of UNIMA. The general attitude was in favour of increasing funding to UNIMA, with the hope of eventual

commercialization of the University. By virtue of having some politicians in certain University committees, their influence, though minimum, was felt at the University level.

While it may be argued that, at the time of the study, there were several universities mushrooming in Malawi, the only other university recognized, and also funded, by Malawi Government was MZUNI. Being smaller than UNIMA, MZUNI exerted minimal influence on the operations of UNIMA. However, some respondents had the opinion that because of its size, it was better managed than UNIMA, and this exerted some pressure on the federal system of administration of UNIMA constituent colleges.

5.12 Synthesis of Emerging Issues

Several issues relating to institutional autonomy of UNIMA emerged from the research findings as described in this chapter. UNIMA's institutional autonomy was influenced by both internal and external factors. The *four* issues that will form part of the discussion in Chapter 6 include: the power of the purse; the accreditation board; the research ethics and ownership of research data, and political interference.

5.12.1 Power of the Purse

The complete dependence of UNIMA on government funding dictated what UNIMA could implement and accomplish. The institution's autonomy was therefore limited by the financial dependence. The more an organization can pay a larger proportion of its way with its own funds, the wider its autonomy reaches into a wide variety of areas, such as decisions about what programme priorities UNIMA can put in place, what new programmes it can create, what infrastructure to develop, which faculty

to hire from which country, and so on. There seems to be a relationship between financial autonomy and autonomy in other areas.

5.12.2 The Accreditation Board

This is a necessary board, especially when a country like Malawi is experiencing the mushrooming of institutions of higher learning. At the time of the study, Malawi did not have this board but government officials stated that such a body was long overdue and was in the process of being formed. Depending on the membership of ‘the yet to be created’ board and who funds it, this can be an additional vehicle for the Government’s intervention in the autonomy of institutions of higher learning, even though such boards are supposed to be independent bodies.

5.12.3 Research Ethics and Ownership of Research Data

All research conducted in Malawi had to be submitted to the National Research Council of Malawi for ethics approval. While any area of research was acceptable, the research topics that attracted government funding were those in the priority areas which the government identified and published. This was seen as a vehicle for government control and as such was a major limit to UNIMA autonomy in research.

In addition, data from any government-sponsored research conducted in Malawi was the property of government and the findings of such research were expected to be published in Malawi. This clearly represented interference with the autonomy of UNIMA in research, as researchers were limited in the areas of research and related follow-up. Further, the fact that any data they collected belonged to government placed limitations upon the researchers’ intellectual property.

5.12.4 Political Interference

The first Head of State heavily politicized the origins of UNIMA. The University Council appointed him as the first Chancellor of the University, and remained the Chancellor for the duration of being the Head of State. The subsequent Heads of State have also been made Chancellors of UNIMA. This clearly represented a conflict of interest. In addition, political appointments to Council tended to politicize discussions and this affected the freedom of Council members in deliberations. Given the size of the Malawian economy, the politicians also exercised significant influence on funding decisions.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, a summary of the study is presented, together with a synthesis of the findings and conclusions. This is followed by a discussion of the findings based on the conceptual framework and the literature review described in Chapter 2. Finally, the implications of the study for practice, policy, theory and research are discussed.

6.2 Summary

This was a study of autonomy in the University of Malawi, a topic which had been a politically sensitive one prior to the multiparty politics of 1994. As a result, Malawi-based researchers had for some time avoided the topic for their own political safety.

6.3 Methods

The focus of the study was to examine the concept of institutional autonomy as it was perceived to be operationalized in the University of Malawi. To address the issue, *six* areas (governance, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters) were identified and research questions aimed at establishing the extent of autonomy in UNIMA were generated. The research questions were based upon the elements of university autonomy (James, 1965), the essential ingredients of institutional autonomy (Ashby, 1966), areas to be protected for

institutional autonomy (Ajayi et al., 1996), the paradigms of governance in higher education (McDaniel, 1996) and attributes of institutional autonomy (Frazier, 1997).

The conceptual framework for the study was characterized along two dimensions: the *attributes of institutional autonomy* (highly centralized to highly decentralized decision-making) and *paradigms of higher education governance* (the six areas of institutional autonomy). These two considerations represented the two axes of a 4 x 6 matrix (*Table 2.2*). In the model, autonomy was conceptualized as a continuum from highly centralized (*low autonomy*) to a highly decentralized (high autonomy) decision-making. The defining characteristics of each of the six areas were outlined in the corresponding cells of the matrix.

This was a case study, utilizing *three* sources of information: interviews (using semi-structured interview guides) to 44 participants, a brief survey (self-administered questionnaires) to 24 participants and documentary reviews. The University of Malawi is composed of five constituent colleges, located in the southern and the central regions of the country, with the University Office playing the coordinating administrative role in the colleges. The researcher visited Malawi for the purpose of data collection between September and December 2005.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 44 respondents (32 internal and 12 external members). The technique used to select the respondents was snowball sampling. The *internal* members were selected from three levels of the University: Council, University Office and College. The *external* members came from government, politicians, regulatory bodies and other universities. A summary of the interviewees shown in *Table 3.1*.

Before the actual commencement of the study, approvals were obtained from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board, as well as from the University of Malawi Research Committee on behalf of the National Research Council of Malawi. Data from the interviews and document reviews were classified thematically, according to the six research areas as outlined in the conceptual framework. Key points that addressed the research questions were identified. A statistical computer package, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data from the questionnaires and relevant charts were produced.

6.4 The Findings

From the perspective of the respondents, institutional autonomy represented the absence of outside control on the operations of UNIMA. The importance of institutional autonomy was viewed from three perspectives: *academic*, *management/administrative* and *financial*. Academic autonomy ensures the conduct of academic work without interference, and this seemed to work well at UNIMA in the post-1994 era. Management/administrative autonomy was based upon the notion that academic institutions should encourage free exchange of ideas and as such, decisions were based on rationality; this justified the committee structure at UNIMA. Financial autonomy represented the ability to generate funds for running the institution without being dependent on government. UNIMA, being highly dependent on government funding, faced limitations in this area. According to the respondents, the task of running UNIMA was seen to be constrained by governmental financial decisions and actions.

It was generally felt that government intervened in the mission of UNIMA. This intervention was mostly indirect through ‘the power of the purse.’ Limited and erratic

funding to UNIMA was seen to adversely affect quality of teaching and research. Where government funded research, greater control of data and publication was seen to affect ‘the dissemination, promotion and preservation of learning responsive to the needs of Malawi and the world’ (*UNIMA Mission statement*). The following section will discuss the findings from the two groups of respondents: those from within UNIMA (the *internals*) and those from outside UNIMA (the *externals*).

6.4.1 Internal Findings

Internal respondent findings are classified according to the six areas of the study: government involvement in UNIMA governance, administration matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters.

6.4.1.1 Government involvement in UNIMA Matters

Some respondents viewed government involvement in UNIMA matters positively because such involvement provided direction to UNIMA on government policy. Additionally, international donations to institutions were normally channeled through government and all UNIMA’s constituent colleges had benefited from this interaction. However, respondents pointed out that there was some Government influence in some of the activities of the University.

Being a public university, most respondents felt that the autonomy of UNIMA was compromised by the fact that the University was theoretically ‘owned’ by Government. As a result, UNIMA was governed by the wishes of Government and not fully according to the professional acumen of the university faculty and administrators.

Questionnaire results showed that government exerted some influence on membership of Council resulting in less autonomy for Council’s decision-making

process; but did not exert any significant influence on membership and control of academic boards and student associations in the constituent colleges.

6.4.1.2 Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Administrative Matters

The University operated as a statutory corporation of Government under the Ministry of Education and was expected to operate independently, under the direction of the University Council. Decisions in administrative matters were the responsibility of the University Office; however, due to UNIMA's dependence on Government funding, Government influence was exerted in some of the administrative decisions through perceived 'ownership' of the University.

The findings from the questionnaire indicated that, even though Government had no legal authority to intervene in the administrative matters of the University, the respondents felt that Government exerted its influence either directly or indirectly on all the decisions that had direct financial implications, for example, student numbers. The University had, on the other hand, autonomy in other areas such as university rules and regulations, academic year duration and award of 'degree' titles.

6.4.1.3 Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Financial Matters

The dependence of UNIMA on Government for its annual budgetary requirements depended on how much Government was able to distribute from its resources. The demands for Government funding had increased since 1994 due to a large number of Government institutions that had sprung up. The effect of this development was that less and less funding was available to UNIMA, and Government lagged behind in following up on UNIMA annual funding requests. This resulted in

UNIMA's failure to implement its planned programmes, operating instead within the limits of a squeezed budget. Thus UNIMA's autonomy to operate was indirectly limited.

Further, in 2002, Government unilaterally decided to apportion the approved budgetary funds directly to constituent colleges, a task originally performed by the University Office (*Interview 16*). Government also introduced a cash-budget system, which required a monthly financial return from colleges to Government before the following month's subvention was released. This caused difficulties in making capital purchases in the constituent colleges.

A major potential fund-raising source for UNIMA was the charging of *commercial* tuition fees but UNIMA needed Government consent to do so. Given both Government and political willingness, UNIMA would raise MK2.6 billion through tuition fees, representing 89 per cent of its funding requirements (2004 budget). At the time of study, fund-raising efforts by UNIMA contributed only about 12 per cent of UNIMA's annual budgetary requirements, implying a high dependence on Government funding. The hope was that Government would soften its stance and allow the University to charge commercial fees if more financial autonomy in the University was to be realized.

The questionnaire analysis indicated that Government intervened in financially related matters, such as financial audits, the University budget, capital expenditure, tuition fee levels and student loans, suggesting that UNIMA's autonomy in those areas was very limited. However, results also indicated that the University had some autonomy in the undertaking or initiation of commercial or moneymaking ventures.

6.4.1.4 Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Personnel Matters

The appointment of university administrators was mostly the responsibility of Council. The Appointments Committee, through a *search committee*, was responsible for the recruitment of all the central office personnel. The normal procedure was vacancy identification, vacancy advertisement for applications, short listing of candidates, the interviews and recommendation to Council after an offer was made to the successful candidate; Government did not interfere with this process.

The appointment of college personnel (both administrative and academic) was decentralized to the colleges, following the MIM Report (1997) recommendation. The University Office ensured that the established UNIMA guidelines were followed. The placement and promotion processes of personnel in the colleges were completely autonomous, free from any outside interference. The part played by Council was to ensure that the criteria, as specified in the guidelines, were being adhered to.

The questionnaire results revealed that government did not intervene in the appointment or dismissal of any member of staff, at any level. However, it could be argued that UNIMA had limited autonomy in the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor since this appointment required the approval of the Chancellor, who was also the Head of State. Due to its financial role to UNIMA, Government also indirectly exerted some influence in UNIMA salaries and conditions of work.

6.4.1.5 Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Academic Matters

Sources of new programmes to be run by UNIMA included requests from the business community, government or initiatives from within the departments. Senate approved the programmes. The approval process was purely an academic exercise and

UNIMA made decisions based on rationality; Government influence did not play a significant role, even in cases where the initial request came from Government.

The selection of textbooks and teaching material was determined internally at the departmental level. There was considerable autonomy in this exercise, especially in the post-1994 era, when the Malawi Censorship Board deviated significantly from the practices of the pre-1994 era.

The qualities of the programmes were subject to regular review by UNIMA faculty. There was also an external validation through external examiners to ensure that international standards were being maintained. The Government was aware of the need for a regulatory body, such as *Council for Higher Education (CHE)*, and measures were in place to establish such a body. With the mushrooming of a number of private universities in the background, the establishment of CHE in Malawi will have to be a priority. As with the other functions, the low and erratic level of Government funding was indirectly affecting the quality of programmes at UNIMA.

Research in UNIMA was coordinated by College Research and Publications Committees (RPCs) and among the several functions, RPCs approved research projects on behalf of Government, using research guidelines from the National Research Council of Malawi. For research done in Malawi, Government considered the research data as a property of the Government and encouraged researchers to publish in local journals for knowledge preservation. In this respect, there was an influence on UNIMA's autonomy from the perspective of Government.

The questionnaire results revealed that Government did not intervene in curriculum and teaching; UNIMA had considerable autonomy to determine teaching

methods, examination methods, introduction and termination of new teaching fields, curriculum, and selection of textbooks. In academic standards, UNIMA had a high level of autonomy to determine entry standards, graduation standards, subject standards and quality standards. For research and publications, UNIMA had limited autonomy to decide on the research priorities, research topics and approval of publications.

6.4.1.6 Institutional Autonomy of UNIMA in Student Matters

Admission to UNIMA was through either the normal route or the parallel programme. The University Selection Committee rigorously followed a clearly outlined criterion for admission. Thousands of candidates qualified by passing the entrance examination but, as UNIMA could only admit about 850 first year students due to limited dormitory availability (bed space), it introduced a parallel programme scheme in 2000, allowing university attendance on a non-residential basis. The selection process at UNIMA was completely autonomous and the candidates were selected on merit.

Student discipline was the responsibility of University administration and Government did not significantly influence any decisions. There was a well-developed infrastructure in the constituent colleges to handle disciplinary cases, which included the Student Representative Council (SRC), personal tutors, student advisors, the College Disciplinary Committee and the Dean of Students.

The questionnaire responses suggested that Government did not intervene in issues related to the entry standards of the students, student selection and admission, pass or failure rates and discipline of students. However, since the presence of students in the colleges had financial implications, it was felt that there was an indirect Government influence in limiting the number admitted through ‘the power of the purse’.

6.4.2 External Findings

So far, the summary of the findings has been from the perspective of *internal* respondents. UNIMA was also *externally* influenced by the Government, regulatory bodies, politicians and other universities (*Figure 4.5*). Since Government influence has already been mentioned, the following section will outline the responses of the other three.

6.4.2.1 Regulatory Bodies

Several regulatory bodies interacted with UNIMA on matters relating to the quality of its graduates. Interviews for this study were conducted with representatives from four of the regulatory bodies: *the Law Society of Malawi* (for law graduates at Chancellor College), the *Board of Engineers* (for engineering graduates at the Polytechnic), the *Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi* (for nurses training at the College of Nursing), and the *Medical Council of Malawi* (for medical doctors training at the College of Medicine). The regulatory bodies, the professional bodies for practice, advised the respective colleges on the curriculum to follow. Upon passing a professional examination, each graduate was registered by the regulatory body and allowed to practice in Malawi. The professionals were then expected to follow the stipulated code of ethics and professional conduct in their respective disciplines.

The regulatory bodies exerted authority in the curriculum of the programmes offered by the respective departments in the constituent colleges in that failure to amend the curriculum as suggested by the regulatory bodies led to the graduates being refused licence to practice their professions in Malawi. However, these regulatory bodies did not significantly impede other areas of UNIMA autonomy.

6.4.2.2 Political Influence

The appointment of the Head of State as Chancellor brought politics into UNIMA and the dual role of Head of State and Chancellorship put the Chancellor in a difficult position as he had to find a balance between political issues and professional decisions. In addition, the appointment of politicians to serve on the University Council had conflicting impacts: either it inhibited free-flow of Council's deliberations as some members did not want to be seen as critics of the ruling political party or assisted in having high-powered political contacts that pushed Council decisions to the *right* political quarters for action.

Members of Parliament indirectly exerted influence on UNIMA since funds allocated by Government to all public institutions, such as UNIMA, were debated and approved by the Parliamentarians before implementation. There was some level of support from some Parliamentarians for increased government funding to UNIMA and encouraged UNIMA to find ways of generating its own funding and be less dependent on government funds. While the fear of losing elections was an obvious consideration, the sentiments from the Parliamentary Committee on Education seemed to support the commercialization of UNIMA. As this commercialization was likely to harm the larger proportion of the students who came from poor families, the proposal was for the needy to be provided with bursaries and/or loans.

Politicians did exert some influence in the financial matters of UNIMA in that they influenced the *machinery* that approved the funding to the University. However, the post-1994 politicians (compared to the pre-1994) did not interfere with the other areas such as personnel affairs, academic affairs or student affairs.

6.4.2.3 Influence of Other Universities

At the time of the study, Government recognized two public universities (UNIMA and MZUNI). UNIMA, with its five constituent colleges and a federal administration seemed to be too stretched and faced coordination difficulties. MZUNI, a much smaller university compared to UNIMA, did not face coordination difficulties as all the colleges were in one location. The respondents felt that MZUNI was being better managed than UNIMA. The success of MZUNI was attributed to offering programmes that had direct impact on the social and economic development of Malawi.

Further, MZUNI was more proactive and there was a sense of ownership of the institution among MZUNI personnel. The debate to restructure the constituent colleges of UNIMA into independent universities was regularly raised during the interviews, and, a number of respondents at the college level favoured the move.

6.5 Discussion

In this section the findings of the study, based on the conceptual framework and the literature review in Chapter 2, are discussed. Specifically, the discussion will be organized according to the centralization-decentralization continuum of the conceptual framework first, and this will be followed by a discussion of emerging issues in the findings. Thirdly, the discussion will be from the perspective of the literature.

6.5.1 Discussion Based upon the Centralization-Decentralization Continuum Aspect of the Conceptual Framework

In this section, the data are presented according to the conceptual framework under the six decisional areas of governance, administrative matters, financial matters, personnel matters, academic matters, and student matters.

The conceptual framework was outlined in Chapter 2, Table 2.2. In the framework, university autonomy was defined and characterized according to (a) decision areas (governance, administrative, financial, personnel, academic and student) and (b) extent of centralization of decision making. Autonomy was conceptualized as a continuum from highly centralized (*low autonomy*) decision-making for each decision area to a highly decentralized (*high autonomy*) system. In the light of the findings, and using the defining characteristics for each cell in the matrix, each decision area was assessed on the basis of the findings to determine the extent of the autonomy that prevailed. Table 6.1 shows the conceptual framework, with UNIMA's original (pre-1994) and current positions derived from the findings on a centralization-decentralization continuum in each of the decision areas.

6.5.1.1 Governance

In keeping with tradition, a University Council, whose composition was defined in the Acts of Parliament (1998) establishing UNIMA, governed UNIMA. The membership of Council was selected by Government and approved by the Chancellor, who was also Head of State. Thus, in one way, government influence was through membership of Council.

Despite being appointed by Government, the perception of participants was that the post-1994 Council was quite independent and enjoyed a lot of intellectual freedom to debate issues in Council. Members were not subservient to government, as was the case before 1994, since issues in Council were debated from the professional point of view.

Table 6.1

UNIMA's current positions of decision areas on the centralization-decentralization continuum

	Highly Centralized (Low Autonomy)	Predominantly Centralized	Predominantly Decentralized	Highly Decentralized (High Autonomy)
Decision Area	-----Continuum-----→			
Governance	# -----→ *			
Administrative Matters	# -----→ *			
Financial Matters	# -----→ *			
Personnel Matters	# -----→ *			
Academic Matters	# -----→ *			
Student Matters	# -----→ *			

Note: Researcher's estimation of level of centralization based upon findings: # before 1994 and * the current (2005) positions.

The post-1994 membership, including Government representatives, felt they were part of Council and did not *unnecessarily* carry out Government orders; they felt free to discuss issues without political influence. As observed by one Council member, “in Council, quality of debate is driven by rationality rather than political intimidation, which was not the order of the day pre-1994 ... Students are now represented on Council, which was unheard of then” (Interview 24).

This post-1994 development was in direct contrast to the pre-1994 situation when there was a lot of government interference in a number of UNIMA decisions and activities such as the personnel appointment into the university, (administrative and

academic), selection of students, selection of textbooks, etc. As a result, UNIMA was indirectly governed by the wishes of Government and not according to the professional and academic acumen of the university faculty and administrators. Council decisions were not binding on government, as the Cabinet decided on the way forward. The thin line between government and the then ruling Malawi Congress Party resulted in interference in the management of the University for political mileage. The post-1994 scenario gives a completely different picture. Thus on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed governance on the right under predominantly decentralized as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.1.2 Administrative Matters

The State President of Malawi as its Chancellor is the head of UNIMA. The Vice-Chancellor (VC) performs the daily administration, with the assistance of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (in academic issues) and the University Registrar (in managerial and financial issues) at the university level. Following the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) Report (1997), the University Office decentralized most of its activities to colleges, and this allowed the constituent colleges to have more autonomy in decision making. In running the college, the Principal is assisted by the Vice-Principal, the Registrar, and the Finance Officer (in administrative issues) and the Deans and the Heads of Department (in academic issues). Decisions made at College level are binding at the University Office and, without Government influence, colleges have the autonomy to decide on issues that directly affected them.

The perception of respondents in this study revealed that collaboration with other universities did not require Government clearance, as had been the case in pre-

1994 era. UNIMA, through constituent colleges, had autonomy in deciding which institution to collaborate with, and in what areas. Examples of areas in which UNIMA acted independent of Government influence included student numbers in the constituent colleges, student numbers in particular fields, establishment or closure or amalgamation of departments or faculties, title of awards, length of courses, duration of academic year and university rules and regulations.

UNIMA made administrative decisions independent of Government but operating under the University Council's direction. There was high autonomy in administrative matters at UNIMA. Thus on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed *administrative matters* on the right under fully decentralized (high autonomy) as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.1.3 Financial Matters

UNIMA was a public university, funded by Government. Despite the post-1994 increase in the number of institutions for Government funding such that the amount of funds available for UNIMA had been shrinking, UNIMA was still dependent on government for more than 90 per cent of its annual budget. UNIMA tried to seek alternative ways to raise funds, including financial contributions from both the normal-entry and the parallel-entry students and the research grants from donors. Other methods included the offering short-term training courses, conducting research and/or consultancies in industries and Government agencies and providing accommodation and catering services to private institutions in the student hostels during the long vacation.

Despite UNIMA having the autonomy to decide on commercial or money ventures to engage in, the contribution of the income-generation activities was only 10-

15 per cent of the annual budget (*Interview17*). The main source of funds for UNIMA would likely be the charging of commercial fees but this was strictly controlled by Government, on the basis of the argument that “Malawi is a poor country and there are poor students who are intelligent but cannot find fees to be able to go to the university. As Government, the feeling is that the poor must also be cushioned to be able to access university education.” (*ExtInterviews 6 & 16*). Since it funded UNIMA, Government insisted that it be consulted on any decision by the University Council to raise tuition fees, and this was an example of the Government’s tight control on UNIMA’s financial matters. It was also noted that sanctioning the charging of commercial fees would likely become a political issue as politicians felt that this would lead to a likely loss of votes during an election. The issue of commercial fees still remains a contentious one between Government and UNIMA. The dilemma represented a vicious cycle.

Apart from the control on budget and tuition fees, Government influence was also apparent in financial audits (through cash budget requirements), approval of major capital expenditure (through cuts in UNIMA’s submitted budget) and financial aid to students (which was not paid in full to the constituent colleges). The survey showed that there was significant Government control of financial decisions due to ‘ownership’ of UNIMA. Efforts by the university to finance itself had proved unsuccessful so far. Government funded UNIMA and significantly controlled its financial decisions. Thus on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed *financial matters* on the left under predominantly centralized as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.1.4 Personnel Matters

Three areas were identified under personnel matters: the recruitment, selection and appointment of university administrators, college personnel, and the promotion of UNIMA staff. As revealed in the interview data, the recruitment, selection and appointment of university administrators was the responsibility of Council. The Appointments Committee, a sub-committee of Council, was responsible for the recruitment of all the University Office personnel, which included the Vice Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the University Registrar, the University Finance Officer, the Internal Auditor and the College Principals. The best candidate was recommended to the University Council for ratification. Government did not interfere with the recruitment and appointment processes.

Following the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) Report (1997) recommendation, recruitment, selection and appointment of college personnel was decentralized to colleges, with the University Office playing the supervisory role in the constituent colleges. College Appointments Committees (sub-committees of Appointments Committee) were responsible for the recruitment of both the *administrative* wing (Vice Principal, Registrar, Finance Officer, Deans and Heads of Department) and the *academic* wing (assistant lecturers to professors). Any such appointments, however, had to be verified with the University Office. As the recruitment process of both administrators and academic members of staff followed specific guidelines outlined by Council, the University Office ensured that the College Appointments Committee worked within the guidelines. There was little possibility of external influence in the recruitment and appointment processes.

In addition to recruitment of university staff, the Appointments Committee of Council and the College Appointments Committee were also responsible for staff promotions. Committees followed the set criteria (outlined by Council) and this limited the opportunity for outside interference. The promotion and placement processes were completely autonomous, purely an academic exercises, free from any outside interference. The part played by Council was to ensure that the promotion criteria, as specified in the guidelines, were being followed.

At UNIMA, staff were recruited by the University Council, with conditions and regulations set by Council, and administrators operated within these parameters, without Government interference. Thus on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed *personnel matters* on the right under fully decentralized (high autonomy) as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.1.5 Academic Matters

Four areas were identified under academic matters: the determination of discipline and programmes, the selection of textbooks, the quality of programmes and finally research and publication. Requests from the business community, government or initiatives from within the college departments represented sources of programmes run by UNIMA. The Senate approved all new programmes. The introduction of new programmes was purely an academic exercise and the University (through the Senate), made related decisions; Government influence did not play a role, even where an initial request for a programme came from government.

The selection of textbooks and teaching material was determined internally at departmental level and the subject lecturer was the main decision maker. There was a

lot of autonomy in this exercise, especially post-1994, when the Malawi Censorship Board did not interfere as it had during the one-party system of government.

The qualities of the programmes were subject to a regular review by UNIMA faculty. There was also an external validation through external examiners to ensure that international standards were being maintained. Government was aware of the need for a regulatory body, the Council for Higher Education (CHE), and plans were in place to establish the CHE.

Research in UNIMA was coordinated from the University Office but, in 1996, the function was decentralized to colleges and their Research and Publications Committees (RPCs) were responsible for research at college level. The RPCs controlled research budget, approved research proposals for donor funding and, using research guidelines from Government, approved research projects on behalf of Government. The University, in this process, was completely autonomous if the funding came from a donor, and slightly less autonomous if it was government-funded research. Publishing research results was easier in the post-1994 period than it had been before. In the national interest, Government encouraged researchers to publish in local journals for knowledge preservation.

The findings revealed that Government did not intervene in curriculum and teaching and this gave a lot of autonomy to UNIMA to determine the curriculum and teaching methods, even though government exerted some influence from time to time in the introduction of new teaching fields through cuts in the budget. For research and publication, government identified the research priority areas it would fund, and by this

means, exerted some influence in such areas, including the publication of the findings. However, Government did not intervene in donor-funded research.

UNIMA was free to decide on disciplines, curriculum, and courses. This area was the responsibility of the Senate, and Government did not interfere in the introduction of new programmes. Thus on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed academic matters on the right under fully decentralized (high autonomy) as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.1.6 Student Matters

Two areas were identified under student matters: student admission and student discipline. Admission to UNIMA was through either the normal route or the parallel programme. University Council clearly outlined the criteria for admission, which included passing the University Entrance Examination (UEE). A committee selected candidates and the University Council endorsed them. The process was followed rigorously by the University Selection Committee, without any external influence (*Interview 4*). The selection process was highly autonomous and the candidates were selected on merit.

Student discipline was the responsibility of UNIMA administration and government did not influence decisions. There was a well-developed infrastructure in the constituent colleges of UNIMA that assisted in disciplining students. Those who assisted included the Student Representative Council (SRC), personal tutors, student advisors, the College Disciplinary Committee and the Deans of Students.

UNIMA independently conducted the student selection process. It also decided on student numbers and at the time of the study, this decision was based on bed space in

the constituent colleges. For fees, UNIMA only decided on the financial contribution levels and as discussed earlier, Government did not allow it to charge commercial fees. Thus, on the centralization-decentralization continuum, the researcher placed the general area of *student matters* on the right under predominantly decentralized as illustrated in Table 6.1.

6.5.2 Summary

According to the findings of the study, there was a high degree of decentralization in administrative, personnel, and academic matters. were highly decentralized; while governance and student matters were predominantly decentralized. The financial matters have been classified as predominantly centralized because government controlled how much UNIMA got for its budgetary requirements. In fact, all three (financial matters, governance and student matters) could be classified as highly decentralized had UNIMA been able to lessen its dependence on government funds. Being allowed to charge commercial tuition fees would generate substantial funds for UNIMA to run its operations. Compared to the pre-1994 era, UNIMA's autonomy, in general, had been undergoing a steady shift from low to high autonomy.

6.6 Discussion Based on Emerging Issues

The previous section summarized the findings in the five decisional areas as they related to the centralization-decentralization continuum of the conceptual framework. In this section, *four* broad issues emerging from the analysis of these areas are discussed. These are governance, the commission for higher education, research and publications and government's funding role.

6.6.1 UNIMA Governance

UNIMA constitution stated that the Chancellor was the Head of State. This dual responsibility put the onus on the incumbent as to whether or not the two offices could be effectively managed. One office suffers at the expense of the other, and the experience in Africa was that the political office (Head of State) trumps the academic office (Chancellor).

Clearly, a number of duties are expected to be undertaken by a chancellor of any university. These may include *ceremonial* duties, like presiding on graduations and receptions in honor of the university; *pastoral* duties, where the chancellor is expected to show some affection for and an interest in students and staff; *scholarly* duties, where the chancellor shows commitment to the world of learning, teaching and culture; and finally, *ambassadorial* duties, when the chancellor carries the university banner both at home and abroad (Durham University, 2006). With the busy political life of the Heads of State in Africa, most would not find time to carry out such duties befitting a chancellor of a university. Their *political life* takes precedence over academic duties, and normally, the Vice Chancellor would be delegated to undertake such other duties, in addition to an already tight schedule in his/her own right. The Vice Chancellor would be expected to report back to the Chancellor, with full knowledge that the person he/she is dealing with is the Head of State. Given the culture of African politics, and specifically, that of the pre-1994 Malawi, the autonomy of UNIMA was affected. As head of the university, UNIMA referred to the Chancellor certain issues for a final decision, for example, the appointment of members of the University Council, the Vice Chancellor and other UNIMA top executives. The decisions from the Chancellor's office could not be

free of political connotations. As State President, he had his political obligations which, somehow, permeated into the university appointments and decision making. Such a scenario can hardly be peculiar to Malawi alone.

Due to the political nature of their appointments, some Council members held overwhelming powers and, as was the case during the pre-1994 era, ran UNIMA with more political than managerial passion. In such cases, the State exercised a major influence on governance of the university, and top university authorities were accountable to the Government and not to the academics. Such forces led to discontentment among students, staff and the wider society. However, the post-1994 scenario had changed towards more openness, but ‘old habits die hard’ at times as certain behaviours tend to be protracted. The heavy governance responsibility bestowed on Council required that members of Council have a thorough understanding of governance of higher education. However, some pre-1994 appointees to Council had questionable academic backgrounds, having been appointed on the basis of political appeasement and this led to poor commitment to their obligations, manifested in such behaviour as non-attendance at Council meetings on the pretext of being *politically* busy.

Under such circumstances, the Council did not enjoy the complete confidence and the full support of the UNIMA academic and administrative staff. Ideally, the appointment of Council members should have been based on merit above all else, and if UNIMA Council were to function autonomously, it was important that government officials or political appointees did not dominate it. This principle seemed to have guided the recent (2005) Council appointments when most of the appointees were

academicians. In a democratic environment, the UNIMA community could recommend possible names to government to be considered for membership of Council to ensure fruitful deliberations at that highest level.

Partly for the reasons described above, the fact that an autonomous Council would run UNIMA was a necessary but not sufficient step in the autonomy process. Council needed enabling conditions for it to function effectively and as a truly autonomous entity. Applying the ideas of Govindaraj et al., (1996), this development required (a) clear and unambiguous guidelines on the role, functions, and powers of the Council, which did not contravene the basic principles of autonomy; (b) the responsibilities of the Council to be specified, and Council members held publicly accountable for decisions and actions – with a clear definition for sanctions to be imposed for contravention of their duties; (c) all staff employed by UNIMA to be selected by the Council, to function under the Council's umbrella, and to owe total responsibility to the Council; (d) the Council to be allowed to function independently, without government interference, subject to the overall policy direction of the government; (e) adequate independent financial resources and management capabilities, at all levels of UNIMA, to be insured. In the absence of such arrangements, Govindaraj argued, the Council could end up either as just another organ of the government, or a body incapable of making effective decisions. In a number of ways, this was the situation in UNIMA. In terms of governance, the post-1994 UNIMA met most of these conditions (with the exception of the inadequate financial resources) and this enhanced its autonomy in the areas of governance, administrative matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters.

Comparatively, there was a clear difference in political interference in UNIMA between pre-1994 and post-1994. During the early years of UNIMA's establishment, political leaders exhibited little understanding and sometimes little sympathy for the needs of university education. This led to them getting involved with decisions in several areas (including student selection, faculty appointments and promotions, and curriculum design) being made on political grounds rather than on merit. These politicians saw universities as source of political danger, as students played a relatively active political role. Government contained student political activism, afraid that the students could be the source of unrest in the county. Political activism could also mean that students were spending a large proportion of their time on politics rather than education. However, the situation had changed in the post-1994 era. As observed by one of the respondents, higher education institutions had to allow opinions on the broader issues that faced society to be expressed and debated respectfully. Student awareness and debate had to be encouraged, as long as they were properly structured. As long as there were no strikes, no injuries, or property destroyed, government should not interfere with the university administration, "because an academician uses his head and mouth to be heard" (*ExtInterview 16*). Government non-interference in the autonomy of a university can be summed up in the phrase "university life ought not to be imposed; it has to evolve" (*ExtInterview 16*).

6.6.1.1 Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Debreczeni (2002) defined institutional *autonomy* as that condition which permits an institution of higher education to govern itself without external interference. As discussed earlier, universities can be either completely self-governing or totally

independent; and yet universities are subject to regulatory constraints in one form or another. According to Govindaraj, et al., (1996), using the absolute criteria to define university autonomy leaves very few or no examples of public autonomous universities, as no university in any country is either completely self-governing or totally independent. University autonomy may have to be defined in relative terms and the issue is one of *degree* of autonomy rather than absolute autonomous state (Austin, 1984). Thus, the construct *autonomous universities* may refer to universities that are, at least, partially self-governing, self-financing and self-directing (Hildebrand & Newbrander, 1993). Though advocating high decentralization (high autonomy) at UNIMA in administrative, personnel and academic matters, in no area was autonomy absolute or without some degree of influence.

UNIMA needed autonomy and some freedom for its academics in order to satisfy its role of generating and disseminating knowledge. The Columbia Encyclopedia defines academic freedom as “the right of scholars to pursue their research, to teach, and to publish without control without control restraint from the institutions that employ them”. The importance of academic freedom is that it enables academics to think freely, to speculate and experiment with new ideas. Without it, universities are unable to be catalysts and sanctuaries for new ideas (HEDC Report, 2002). Knowledge generated through this process is important for the development of any society. The pre-1994 era in Malawi did not tolerate academic freedom. As an institution for the generation and dissemination of knowledge and information, UNIMA should have been allowed to carry out these functions. It was inconsistent with this philosophy as it effectively

punished the academics and restricted the university for doing what it was supposed to do.

As pointed out by Carver (1993), much of state interference in academic life in Malawi is covert and difficult to pinpoint, but examples included the imprisonment and expulsion of academic staff and students and the banning of publications. Carver stated:

State power is primarily exercised through a system of unwritten boundaries, with a well-paid network of informers to police them. Malawian academics know what they can and cannot say, what they can and cannot research... Malawian academics comment in private that the self-censorship imposed by the system is its most damaging effect since it undermines intellectual honesty. Perhaps equally damaging is the almost universal lack of trust among colleagues, since one is never sure who is reporting back to the police, the MCP or the Chairman of the University Council. There is no possibility of 'academic freedom' in the university when freedom of thought and conscience is so manifestly absent in society as a whole. (pp. 66-67)

As observed by Carver, 'secrecy' was the order of the day during the pre-1994 era and trust among colleagues was lacking. The university became subject to the same reign of silence as the rest of Malawi.

The post-1994 experience was different. The experience of the researcher during the data collection exercise was that all the participants (from both the Government and the university side) were willing to be interviewed and to have their interviews tape-recorded. In addition, the participants identified the autonomy issues at UNIMA, and made recommendations to address them. The participants were open to the researcher, an act that would not have been the case before 1994. This suggested that the climate in which Malawians were currently operating was a relaxed one, and individuals are trusting each other more than before. The issue of trust is fundamental to autonomy as the higher the level of trust, the more autonomous an institution becomes.

6.6.2 The Commission for Higher Education

The role of the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) was to ensure that the relationship between the government and higher education institutions is maintained. It advises the minister responsible for education on the promotion of higher education through the establishment and development of universities; advises government on higher education policy and supervises university operations. Further, the Commission accredits, evaluates and reviews the programmes of both public and private universities (Otieno, 2003). The Commission consists of representatives of the government, institutions of higher education, the private sector, and other important stakeholders as student organizations. Other similar bodies include research councils (fund and promote research), professional councils (focus on specific areas of higher education), and governing councils (or board of trustees). To be effective, these bodies required clear mandates, well established operating procedures, and full autonomy from both government and academia. Further, full control over the resources to be allocated and the authority and tools to sanction parties who did not abide by the established procedures were also important. (Task Force Report, 1996).

In Malawi, the rationale for establishing the Commission was to make provisions for the advancement of higher education. However, at the time of the study, Malawi did not have a Commission for Higher Education and, administratively, higher education issues were handled by either the Department of Planning or the Department of Secondary Education in the Ministry of Education. Most respondents felt that the absence of such a Commission in Malawi's higher education sector indicated the Government's minimum concern for tertiary education. The post-1994 government

recognized the importance of the Commission and plans were underway to establish the first ever CHE in Malawi.

As stated earlier, this era experienced the proliferation of private universities, and the absence of the Commission made it difficult for government to appreciate tertiary education developments in the country. As such, the coordination of the activities in the UNIMA constituent colleges and the new private universities in Malawi was haphazard. For example, at the time of the study, the researcher noted that Government (Ministry of Education) did not have the official number of private universities that were in operation (or in the process of being formed). Commenting on the proliferation of new universities in Malawi, one respondent observed:

This has stimulated the idea of creating a qualification framework for accreditation of education standards. We know that we will not be spared in this despite being an older university... There is anecdotal evidence that the performance of some of the university's graduates leaves a lot to be desired in areas such as writing skills. This highlights the need for improved quality of higher education in Malawi. (*Interview 27*)

These are issues the Commission would be expected to address.

The absence of the Commission in Malawi was, therefore, a concern of both academicians and higher education stakeholders. For the *academicians*, apart from being the primary means by which university programmes would assure education quality to students and the public, accreditation would provide a source and urge for continuous improvements in the educational practices being followed by the various institutions. Furthermore, it was important to students that there be a smooth transfer of programmes among universities in Malawi for those who would wish to transfer to other universities. For higher level education *stakeholders* (for example, employers), the Commission would assist in evaluating the credentials of job applications from

graduates of different universities from both within and outside Malawi. As such, employers would make informed opinion in evaluating the academic qualifications of potential employees.

The structure of the yet-to-be formed Malawi CHE was not clear, but according to a Government official, it would most likely be housed in the Ministry of Education.

Otieno (2003) outlined the composition of the Kenyan CHE as follows:

The policy making body has a membership of 27 Commissioners. It is headed by a Chairman, appointed by the President, who is assisted by a Vice-Chairman. Members of the Commission are appointed mainly from the Universities on the basis of their experience in higher education. The Government is represented in the Commission by the Permanent Secretaries in charge of Education, Finance, Head of the Civil Service and Secretary to the Cabinet and the Permanent Secretary/Director of Personnel Management.

If such is likely to be the composition of the Commission in Malawi, then it would be similar to the composition of the UNIMA Council. Depending on the strength of the membership, there could be a likelihood of the Commission developing as an agency for government influence. As observed by Otieno, the Kenyan experience was that the Vice Chancellors, due to their political appointments, and through the Vice Chancellors' Committee, were too powerful and always by-passed the Commission in many aspects. The Vice Chancellors mostly dealt directly with the Chancellor or Minister for Education instead of the Commission. This weakened CHE in performing its statutory requirements. It was hoped that the Malawi CHE would be able to perform its statutory requirements.

6.6.3 Research and Publications in Malawi

Research is the activity that differentiates universities from other educational tertiary institutions and affirms the relevance of universities to society. According to

Amonoo-Neizer (1998), the revitalization of research requires freedom of expression as a condition precedent for independent thinking; appropriate incentives for research output in terms of promotion; and guaranteed minimum funding for both governments and donors. In Malawi, the National Research Council (NRCM) promoted, coordinated research activities and cleared research projects at the national level. The Council ensured that any research project proposed for execution was geared to national developmental needs and goals (NRCM Document, 2002). Research clearance as outlined in the NRCM's procedures and guidelines took a long time to be cleared and this led to delays in project implementation and loss of funding for some researchers. In order to speed up the approval of research projects, NRCM decentralized research clearance to sectoral institutions. The NRCM provided the sectoral institutions with the general framework and guidelines for the conduct of research. At UNIMA, the College Research Committees cleared most of the research projects, with the exception of sensitive areas, such as the use of human subjects for research. This area remained the prerogative of NRCM to handle.

In undertaking its functions, the NRCM was guided by constitutional principles relating to freedom of access to information, academic freedom and freedom of expression without which innovation would be inhibited (*NRCM Document, 2002*). However, NRCM insisted that it owned any research done on the soil of Malawi, even if it were a foreign donor-sponsored research. This development was one way in which government interfered with the academic freedom in research at UNIMA. The issue of research data ownership raises a lot of debate in research, but it would seem reasonable to assume that it should be owned by the researcher. In addition, NRCM's expectation

that such research be published in the local journals in Malawi did constitute a limit upon the researcher's autonomy in the publication of research results. Ideally, any researcher should have the right to publish in any forum in which he/she feels the research results will have the greatest impact.

6.6.4 Government's Funding Role

The respondents unanimously suggested that finance was the key to UNIMA autonomy: that full autonomy was not possible without financial independence. While financial efficiency and discipline were important, the ultimate consideration was whether or not UNIMA could raise the resources required to cover UNIMA's expenditures from the current sources of revenue. The *external* stakeholders felt that more autonomy would enable UNIMA to run its operations with increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Commenting on the necessity of good governance of universities and non-interference by governments in the running of African universities, Mwiria (1992) stated:

If universities are to enjoy fully the autonomy guaranteed by their countries' constitution, governments have to restrain themselves from directing what takes place at these institutions...the enjoyment of academic freedom is critical if Africa's universities are to nurture creativity and innovation which are valid to national development... Non-interference in university affairs by government does not, however, mean that universities should not be accountable to governments and society as a whole. (p. 27)

Despite Government insistence that it did restrain itself from directing what took place at UNIMA, failure to grant absolute financial autonomy made it difficult for UNIMA to enjoy full autonomy in its areas of operation. As was discussed in Chapter 5, the restriction from Government not to allow UNIMA to charge the commercial fees, while

allowing it to charge the MK25000 financial contribution, made UNIMA too dependent on Government funds. Financial dependence on the state meant that funding levels fluctuated with the ups and downs of government resources.

In Malawi, Government drew most of its authority in UNIMA governance from its being the main financier. However, the post-1994 government funding proved inadequate to meet the rising needs of UNIMA (*Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2*). Several respondents argued for the need to urgently strengthen UNIMA's financial and resource base. The dependence of UNIMA on government for both recurrent and development expenditure was no longer sustainable. Donor agencies had contributed to infrastructure development in the 1960's to 1980's, but this had since stopped (UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2004-2010). Further, UNIMA's income and expenditure analysis indicated excess of expenditure over income (*Table 5.2*). This heavy reliance on government funding raised questions about the ability of UNIMA to achieve true financial autonomy. As observed in HEDC Report (2002):

The provider of financing can also undermine autonomy, with major sponsors trying to influence the activities of higher education institutions. This is a particular danger in developing countries, where a single institution such as the State or religious entity tends to contribute a relatively large share of the resources available to higher education institutions.

This was clearly the case at UNIMA as government was responsible for more than 90 per cent of its budgetary requirements and this financial dependency put the autonomy of the institution at risk. The fact that UNIMA would go to government and seek additional funding when they were in financial difficulty was likely to eliminate the competitive pressures that would force UNIMA to be efficient. However, since UNIMA was a public institution and committed to public service, the government was forced to

relent to the requests, albeit with stringent conditions. As observed by one respondent, “UNIMA’s debt to individual businesses, which had risen to substantial levels due in part to rising bank interest rates, required government to give the university money to pay off the debt” (*Interview 24*). This needed political will from government to invest more money into education.

Lack of adequate resources provide one of the serious challenges for African higher education. A number of fronts need funding for social-economic development and governments are under pressure to provide the funds. The government’s dilemma is how to provide adequate funding for its universities in the context of limited resources. As pointed out by CHE of South Africa (2001):

Given the critical role of universities in social-economic development, no country can afford not to support at least some higher education institutions of high quality. Some institutions cannot function adequately without reasonable levels of state investment. As a general rule, about 15-25 per cent of a county’s education budget should be spent on higher education; the education budget should aim at representing 7 per cent of GDP.... In general, staff salaries should not consume more than 65-70 per cent of the institution’s expenditure allowing adequate expenditure on infrastructure such as libraries, information technology and on research. About 70 per cent of revenue should be provided by governments, 20 per cent from private sources including tuition fees and 10 per cent from other income generating activities – contract research, letting out university facilities, etc. (n.p.)

Malawi’s experience was that the entire Ministry of Education was allotted only 11 per cent of the national budget and, of this, 68 per cent went to Primary Schools, leaving only 32 per cent to be shared between secondary and university education. With secondary schools getting a bigger share, UNIMA’s share was dismally small (*ExtInterview 16*). Compared to the recommendation by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) of South Africa, the amount spent on higher education in Malawi fell

far short to make an impact, which resulted in financial burden for UNIMA administrators to 'properly' run the university.

Earlier, it was suggested that had Government allowed the charging of competitive fees, UNIMA would have raised nearly 80 per cent of the budget (2004 figure). However, CHE of South Africa (2001) observed that student fees only generated little or no income "since over 80 per cent of the funds were spent in personnel and student costs, such as students expected to stay in residences at no cost" (p. 8). It can be argued that while tuition fees can be one source of income, it should be supplemented by a student financial aid scheme, such as loans. The recovered loans can provide a valuable source of revenue for further student loans. In addition to the levying of tuition fees, other income-generating alternatives for UNIMA included admitting private (also foreign) students, running continuing education, contracting services to business and industry and hiring out university facilities.

Sources for the financing of higher education is not limited to the public purse. Funding for higher education can be provided and financed either entirely publicly, or entirely privately or by some combination of the two. A purely public system is not well positioned to satisfy the demands for excellence and access, and a purely private system does not adequately safeguard the public interest (HEDC Report, 2002). African universities have been dependent almost exclusively on the State for their funding (Otieno, 2003).

Faced with dwindling financial support from government, UNIMA developed ways for raising additional revenue. The parallel programme option was the most effective as it achieved immediate positive results in addressing some of the financial

debts of the colleges. In addition, UNIMA needed to consider implementing most of the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) Report (1997) recommendations as a basis for strengthening its financial base. For example, as a cost reduction strategy, MIM's recommendation for decentralizing most activities to colleges, (which was implemented by UNIMA in 2000), was aimed at having a leaner structure at the University Office, and the funds that would be saved at the University Office would go to the constituent colleges.

However, most respondents observed that more personnel were being hired at the time by the University Office when most of the Office's activities were decentralized to colleges and suggested the need for the Office to justify the existence of so many 'high-powered' office personnel. Clearly, Government viewed this development as an empire-building exercise, which was unnecessary at a time when UNIMA was financially strapped. The decision by Government (Treasury) to subvent the constituent colleges directly (without going through the University Office as was the case before), suggested that Government supported the 'lean structure' proposal and could have been Government's move to prove the redundancy of the University Office in certain functions. This represented an indirect but very tangible exercise of government control.

The Malawi Institute of Management's (1997) recommendation to outsource non-core activities (hostels, feeding of students and maintenance), which were being undertaken by UNIMA, would allow the UNIMA to concentrate its efforts in the *core areas* (teaching, research and public service). Unfortunately, this occasioned the retrenchment of about 1100 clerical, technical and support (CTS) staff and UNIMA

needed about MK59 million as severance pay. Government was approached to assist in clearing this one-time expenditure so that the money that was being spent on salaries and other activities of the now retrenched CTS staff would be redirected to the core functions of UNIMA.

Some respondents felt that given the current level of government funding, UNIMA could do much more in the area of core activities, since colleges diverted funds to running hostels, students' subsistence, and college maintenance duties, which was very costly. According to the MIM Report (1997), money from subvention was to be invested in developing UNIMA and not to be diverted to non-core areas. At the time of the study, the MIM Report recommendation had not yet been implemented in full. The financial implication of the delay in implementing the recommendations was that UNIMA would spend much more than the MK59 million on CTS staff, as several parameters had since changed. This would be at the expense of the university's core functions.

Higher education institutions require sufficient financial stability if they are to achieve orderly development. Financial uncertainty, sharp budgetary fluctuations, and political favoritism hinder good governance and make rational planning impossible (Task Force Report, 1996). This was the experience of UNIMA as it made repeated requests to government for extra funding, either because of delays in releasing the approved funds, or the approved funds fell short of the requested figures. Korea and the Netherlands are cited as examples of public higher education institutions which were granted the right to set their own fees in an effort to strengthen their financial autonomy (OECD, 2003). The major questions remain as to whether or not, and how, UNIMA

will be able to fully finance its operations without being fully dependent on government and thus achieve some financial autonomy.

The charging of commercial fees seemed the best option. As was mentioned earlier, the introduction of financial contributions and later parallel programme fees were viewed as steps towards the introduction of commercial tuition fees. On paper (and using 1994 figures), tuition fees would contribute nearly 90 per cent of the amount requested from government in a given financial year (*Table 5.2*).

Australian higher education institutions obtained about 30 per cent of their revenue from student fees by 2001 (OECD, 2003). This avenue was, however, not available to UNIMA as Government was not keen to approve the charging of commercial fees as this had potential to adversely affect equality of access to higher education. Further, dramatic increases in tuition fees were likely to be resisted vigorously by interest groups. Even though some members of the Parliamentary Committee on Education indicated a softer attitude towards charging fees, most politicians seemed not to be keen to take this political risk due to likely loss of votes at an election. Therefore the commercialization of UNIMA was a difficult and unlikely prospect for the foreseeable future.

A proposal from some respondents in this study was that being a national university and due to Government's failure to subvent it in full, UNIMA should charge commercial fees, and agree with government on the provision of 850 scholarship bedspace places for students for all the colleges. Government could then be advised that any scholarship would be pegged at the commercial fee of MK350,000 per student per annum. The rest of the space would be open to those who could afford the fees. Since

1996, Ireland has practiced a similar plan where tuition fees are paid by the government (Sporn, 2002). The fact that many Malawians could afford to send their children to other countries (both within the region and also abroad) for university education but failed to do so due to shortage of foreign exchange in the commercial banks, made this proposal a welcome development. The funds from fees available at UNIMA would be used to address some of the challenges facing UNIMA, as outlined by Siwela (1999). These problems include: financing of higher education, access and equity, relevance and quality of higher education, access to information technology, brain drain and dilapidated academic and physical infrastructure. In fact, the above suggestion would enhance the education standards at UNIMA, making it less necessary for students to seek university education elsewhere outside the country.

Another potential avenue to raise funds for UNIMA was to seek contributions from the Alumni. This was not practiced at UNIMA at the time of the study. For example, in many universities in North America, the alumni and friends gave regularly to the annual development funds of their university, college, departments and programmes. These gifts, of all size, provided substantial funds for the university and a pool of resources that could be easily directed by the university, college and other units to where they were needed most. As was pointed out earlier, a considerable number of students had graduated from UNIMA and this represents a potentially substantial source of contribution.

Being an autonomous institution does not imply absence of controls and regulations. What is relevant and important is the effect of the degree of autonomy on the performance of the university. The absence of appropriate regulation and

accountability can lead to abuses of power and an overall poorer performance. Higher education institutions must be accountable to their sponsors, and in the case of Malawi, UNIMA has to be accountable to Government. Though HEDC Report (2002) recommended that “a buffer mechanism may be needed to help determine the appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability” (p. 3), the absence of the Commission for Higher Education in Malawi did not interfere with UNIMA being accountable to Government for the funding it received. The *cash budget* procedure, where constituent colleges received monthly subventions, required each constituent college of UNIMA to account for the previous month’s funds before getting the next subvention. UNIMA accepted this responsibility, as, according to Ajayi, et al. (1996), it was not willing to challenge its solidarity with society and with the government as a representative of the State.

6.6.5 Summary

The State has a legitimate role to care for the public interest in higher education and, in the absence of the Commission for Higher Education in Malawi, Government was involved in the design and adaptation of the regulatory frameworks of the tertiary education sector. As government has been funding higher education for a long time, and because this practice is likely to continue, Government control of higher education is likely to continue.

As a public institution, UNIMA is likely to continue to educate a large share of Malawian students even in the face of mushrooming private universities. The taxpayers will expect this and accept the Government’s legitimate authority in defining and working towards the public interest. The Government’s funding role therefore remains

significant. Even though Government spending on higher education has been diminishing, the tertiary education sector in Malawi would find it difficult, if not impossible, to operate without State funding. Higher education is still of national importance in Malawi and its place in the national development of the economy is expected to continue to grow. The intention by government to establish yet another public university in the centre of the country to specialize in Science and Technology is testimony to this national development idea (The National News, 2006).

According to the respondents in this study, instead of decreasing funding to tertiary education, as is currently the case, government needs to increase its funding and spend more on higher education by, among other actions, allocating more money to student loans. Government has to be accountable to the public for the use of the public funds. Due to the funding role, government can be expected to oversee how UNIMA utilizes the public funds. This explains UNIMA's accountability to Government for the use of the public funds. In addition, the parent ministry, Education, and the yet to-be-established Commission for Higher Education will have to work with the higher education institutions in Malawi to ensure that the institutions are in line with the enacted regulations.

Ensuring access to students who have qualified from poor families will continue needing government's attention and intervention. This will call for a needy-students categorization mechanism to assess their financial standing in order to qualify for government student loans. The current practice in UNIMA of awarding loans to every student is not sustainable. Thus user fees will have to be levied upon those who can afford them, while the rest receive loans. Otherwise, qualified but poor students will

miss university places due to their inability to meet university costs. This kind of situation justifies state intervention. As Wolf (2002) argued, a government which is serious about economic growth needs to be quite careful when deciding on its educational spending.

Apart from the funding role, government intervention in higher education is necessary. Government cannot sit idly by if, for example, student enrolment in the university is falling (or rising), education standards in institutions are falling, the contribution of higher education to the general development output of the country is unsatisfactory. The Malawi Government has both developmental and educational objectives. Higher education has to play a role in attaining the country's development goals through the achievement of its educational goals. The government can therefore not afford to stand by on the affairs of higher education.

6.7 Discussion Based on Literature Review

A review of the literature showed that most writers on university governance were critical of government interference in operations of universities (McDaniel, 1996; Neave and van Vught, 1991; Clarke, Hough and Stewart, 1984) and advocated instead decentralization of decision-making to universities (Volkwein, 1986). Today, governments' greater interest is for educational institutions to help meet economic and social needs of their countries. Governments also accept that central planning of knowledge creation, teaching and learning is often inefficient (OECD, 2003). Thus, a thriving society and economy requires institutions to operate with a degree of independence and this has been, to some extent, UNIMA's experience since 1994 when

government started to allow the University to make a number of decisions affecting the running of the institution independent of Government influence.

6.7.1 Forms of government influence

There are various forms in which governments exercise influence on higher education institutions. According to McDaniel (1996), the players on the field of government influence vary substantially from system to system. McDaniel observed that there were variations in:

- the number of layers of power, like federal influence, State influence, regional influence and local influence;
- the use of intermediate agents/organizations to execute higher education policy or part of it, for instance, finance for education, research funding, decisions on student enrolment, quality control; and
- the role and influence of the courts (p. 142).

McDaniel further noted that policy instruments used by government in the practice of governance varied considerably, from national/policy legislation, the board of governors, finance, and planning. As a public university, operating within the Ministry of Education, Government's influence on UNIMA was mainly through State influence. Just like any other institutions operating in Malawi, UNIMA had to comply with Government expectations. The influence of the courts in the new post-1994 era left UNIMA with no option but to appoint a legal advisor, as the university has been involved in litigation on several occasions. There were court cases, which had overruled UNIMA academic decisions, for instance, reinstating a student who, according to examination regulations, had been expelled from the university for having failed a particular course of study. Some students, through lawyers, have successfully challenged some expulsions. In essence, this represents a continuing vehicle for challenging the authority of UNIMA.

McDaniel (1996) noted that the absence of government power did not automatically imply that institutions had full authority. In the area where government was absent (or withdrew), the void was often filled by other societal powers. Citing a United Kingdom example, McDaniel noted that the actual influence of government on the public institutional budget and its spending was limited, but much of that power had been replaced by powerful funding agencies or “in research, by a large proportion of the institutional appropriation being channeled through research councils, which allocate money on a firmly earmarked basis” (p. 141). In Malawi, project funders normally specified how the funds should be spent (tied-aid) and in certain cases this was contrary to the priorities of beneficiary institution. Thus, the autonomy of the institution, with respect to the usage the project funds, will be limited as institutions would have to comply with the demands of the donors.

In the field of curriculum regulations and quality assessment, different sorts of curriculum regulations direct the minimum content of the curricula. The professional accreditation bodies exert influence on the fundamental academic areas and universities have to comply with such requirements. As discussed earlier, the professional accreditation bodies at UNIMA included the Medical Council of Malawi for medical students at the College of Medicine, the Malawi Law Society for law students at Chancellor College, the Malawi Board of Engineers for engineering students at the Polytechnic and Nurses Council of Malawi for nursing students at the Kamuzu College of Nursing. Accreditation bodies and their procedures do have influence in professional practice, even though they [*Accreditation Bodies*] did not interfere with the autonomy of UNIMA.

Thus, at the *macro-level*, universities will be influenced by government in its operations in one way or another. However, at the *micro-level*, the day-to-day management of the university should enjoy freedom from government influence in respect to the internal organization of the university, its governance, the internal management of financial resources, in the generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, conditions of study, and the freedom to conduct teaching and research (IAU Working Document, 1997). The study showed that the post-1994 UNIMA was moving towards this type of experience.

6.7.2 Other Experiences at UNIMA

Richardson and Fielden (1997) noted that, apart from governments in most African countries exerting control over the public universities in finance, other non-legislative controls included the issuing of work permits (for expatriate staff), and the tendency for politicians to extend their patronage into the university. UNIMA's post-1994 experience in each of the two cases was different. In terms of the work permit, most post-1994 staff at UNIMA's constituent colleges were indigenous Malawians and as such did not need work permits. Only the College of Medicine, which had a majority of expatriate staff (65 per cent), faced government pressure in terms of expatriate work conditions. However, government influence on work permits was minimal as the numbers involved were small compared to the total number of UNIMA employees.

Omari (1994) identified several potential areas of friction between universities and their governments in developing countries and these included (1) who may teach and what may be taught; (2) who makes key appointments; (3) determination of enrolment growth rates; (4) financial and other resource management; (5) use of state

security on campuses; (6) management of staff promotions and travel; and (7) freedom to criticize the State. The findings of this study indicated that while these might have been areas of friction between UNIMA and Government in the pre-1994 era, the post-1994 situation was completely different. UNIMA had the full authority to decide who taught and what was taught. As was discussed in the conceptual framework section, the post-1994 government involvement in UNIMA's academic matters, personnel matters and student matters was very minimal. Government, though, influenced decisions that had some financial implications.

In the West, universities can be taken as places where people seek free development according to their natural inclination and where knowledge is pursued for its own sake. In Africa, it is difficult to view universities as autonomous institutions where preservation and creation of knowledge for its own sake is a primary concern. Like most countries on the African continent, Malawi believed that pursuit of knowledge must be directly useful to the country and, at UNIMA, it was the Senate's responsibility to ensure that *useful* courses were introduced (*ExtInterview 6, University Calendar, 2001-2002*). Thus, the levels of autonomy experienced in Western universities might be different from those of the African setting.

State intervention in higher education system in some countries in Africa could be justified under the guise of supervising the curriculum content to ensure that the accepted content is being taught. At UNIMA, the Senate and its committees had no government representation and therefore, Government did not get involved in academic matters of the university. The Senate, which was responsible for all academic issues at UNIMA, was chaired by the Vice Chancellor. The membership of Senate was

composed exclusively of academicians (College Principals, Deans, Heads of Departments and Student representatives). UNIMA had the freedom to establish new specialties or programmes depending on demand for such programmes and government did not interfere. Senate approved new courses based on rationality and not external (government) influence. UNIMA had high level of autonomy in the nature of programmes and courses it ran in the constituent colleges even in cases where UNIMA requested government to fund a new programme. Government supported donor funding for projects in UNIMA and assisted in facilitating many such undertakings in the constituent colleges. This supported the fact that Government was now steering at a distance through the giving of more autonomy and self-responsibility for institutions of higher education and it was clearly a departure from Kickert's (1995) proposition that of the classical government steering by means of legislation, prohibitions and regulations.

The UNIMA's Strategic Plan (2005-2010) contained stakeholders' expectations, objectives, vision and mission. The Strategic Planning Team, which was appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, worked independent of government. The Team mapped out UNIMA's direction for the next five years in terms of goals and programmes. Thus, Government allowed UNIMA to exercise its freedom in the determination of its future goals and programmes. The Government representatives on University Council (Secretaries for Human Resources and Development, Treasury and Education) played the *supervisory role* in connection with policy issues but did not influence Council decisions. The Vice-Chancellor, assisted by the Pro-Vice Chancellor and the University Registrar, exercised administrative leadership within the framework set by the University Council. As shown in Figure 6.1, the current position of *administrative*

matters on the centralization-decentralization continuum is on the right, indicating that the administrators had a high degree of autonomy in deciding on administrative issues.

McDaniel (1996) observed that the results of world economic recession gave governments the opportunity to exert greater control over social systems than had been sought by them during periods of full employment. As part of this general move, the university system was brought under much close examination than before (Clarke et al., 1984) and university administrators were expected to give an increasingly detailed account of the results of their actions to the government; and this affected the extent of autonomy the universities retained in their operations (Elton, 1988). Elton argued that as the major source of funding to universities, government exerted its influence during UNIMA's budget presentation at Capital Hill and that in certain cases, important capital expenditures have had to be abandoned when government insinuated that there would be no money available for such projects. In Malawi, the introduction of the cash budget was a direct result of this control where Government would fund UNIMA colleges individually on a month-to-month basis and demanded a detailed explanation of the previous months' expenditure before the following months funding would be released (*ExtInterview 8*). On the other hand, government was able to assist UNIMA in identifying donor organizations to fund certain projects (*ExtInterview 6*).

6.8 Implications of the Study

The centralization-decentralization continuum of the conceptual framework of the study and the emerging issues of the findings were discussed in the previous section. In addition, a discussion based upon the literature review was also provided. The

following section deals with the implications of this study for theory, research, policy, and practice.

6.8.1 Implications for Theory

The theoretical implications for this study arise from the ways in which the findings agree with, complement, and add to existing theory regarding the autonomy of higher education institutions in Africa. *Four* theories will be discussed: *substantive and procedural autonomy* (Berdahl, 1994), *state control and state supervision* (Neave and Van Vught, 1994), *triangle of coordination* (Clark, 1983) and *views of the role of the university* (Watt, 1992).

6.8.1.1 Berdahl (1994) Substantive and Procedural Autonomy

The findings of the study indicated that UNIMA enjoyed both *substantive autonomy* (power of the university to determine its own goals and programmes) and *procedural autonomy* (power to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued) (Berdahl, 1994).

6.8.1.1.1 Substantive Autonomy

The post-1994 government did not intervene in the affairs of UNIMA but allowed the University to autonomously operate in the determination of its goals and programmes. As UNIMA was the only university in the country during that time, the pre-1994 government tended to scrutinize activities at UNIMA, to ensure that UNIMA was not a forum for political activity. Since 1994, government's attitude has changed and decisions on what programmes to offer, including the curriculum, course structure, and examination regulations are made by UNIMA. The shareholders' expectations were

that UNIMA would be a leader in the maintenance of high academic standards and be an engine for driving the nation's social-economic growth through the provision of highly qualified human resources (UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2005-2010). As noted above, the university committees, where government officials played a collaborative role, modeled both the vision and mission of UNIMA.

In terms of leadership of the University, the study showed that the Vice Chancellor was responsible for the day-to-day university administrative operations and only reported to Council for accountability purposes. The post-1994 Chancellor (who was still the Head of State), was kept abreast of developments in the University but was not involved in the day-to-day administrative issues. The Vice-Chancellor chaired most of the university committees (Senate, Appointments, Academic Planning, Academic Courses, University Library, and University Information and Communication Technology) and was also a member of Council and University Finance committees. UNIMA also exercised substantive control in the area of specialty or programme set-up and had the freedom to establish new specialities or programmes without the approval of government.

6.8.1.1.2 Procedural Autonomy

The government did not control the procedural matters of UNIMA. For example, in *personnel matters*, UNIMA had the freedom to recruit anyone who was qualified at any level: University Office, college or departmental levels. UNIMA also had the freedom to appoint College Deans, Departmental Heads and Faculty and administrative staff without Government exerting any influence. There was a high level of freedom in granting academic ranks to its faculty and there were promotion criteria in place, drawn

by UNIMA committees that were used by the constituent colleges. In *academic matters*, UNIMA was free to award degrees and other academic qualifications as determined by Senate and approved by the University Council. Criteria for selection of students was outlined (UNIMA Calendar, 2001-2002) for normal entry students, parallel students and mature-entry students' programmes. As enrolment at UNIMA was restricted to bed space in the colleges, each faculty selected its quota of students to be admitted into its faculty, using the set criteria. The Student Selection Committee, composed of the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Principals and Deans were responsible for the selection. In *student matters*, the college Principals had the ultimate responsibility for student discipline. The College Disciplinary Committee advised the Principal on the serious cases of students for suspension or dismissal. As Government allocation to cover operating costs was not adequate, all students admitted to UNIMA were expected to contribute towards their university education, which, over the years had risen from MK200 (1985) to MK25000 (2004). These figures tend to be adjusted continually by UNIMA in line with the rising costs of living.

It can be argued, therefore, that the post-1994 UNIMA enjoyed, to some extent, both substantive and procedural autonomy as outlined by Berdahl (1994). The next section will discuss state control and state supervision (Neave and Van Vught, 1994).

6.8.1.2 Neave and Van Vught (1994) – State Control and State Supervision

Based on the role of the state in various other higher education systems in the world, Neave and Van Vught (1994) identified two general models, the *state control* model and the *state-supervising* model. Oliver (2001) added a third model, *state*

interference. The exact role of the states could range from extreme *state control* to total *laissez faire* (Task Force Report, 1996).

6.8.1.2.1 State Control

In this model, government owns, finances, and operates higher education institutions, politicians frequently appoint vice-chancellors, and ministries dictate degree requirements and curricula. Van Vught (1994) noted that in developing countries, the *state control* model of higher education appeared to be prominent as the government heavily regulated and controlled higher education institutions, based on the rationale that the state was entitled to control the systems that they fund. Further, the state control of higher education tended to undermine many major principles of good governance.

According to HEDC Report (2000), the direct involvement of politicians generally politicized higher education, thus widening the possibilities for corruption, nepotism, and political opportunism. This state of affairs existed at UNIMA in the pre-1994 era, when Government (and politicians) interfered in the running of the institution.

6.8.1.2.2 State Supervision

This model aim at balancing the state's responsibility to protect and promote the public's interest with an individual institution's need for academic freedom and autonomy. In the context of UNIMA, in order to achieve this balance, a buffer body such as the Council for Higher Education, was necessary to advise the Government on the size, shape and funding of higher education.

In this model, the Government would be responsible for the broad framework and planning for the higher education system, its financing as well as quality control at the macro-level and would see its task as *supervising* the higher education system to ensure academic quality and maintain a certain level of accountability. This is the direction UNIMA will hope for as Government contemplates the establishment of the Commission for Higher Education.

6.8.1.2.3 State Interference

In this model, higher education institutions are allowed to largely plan and proceed at their own discretion. Oliver described the model as follows:

At most, government provides the broad outline of a rather vague higher education policy, as well as funding; for the rest, institutions are not directly controlled. However, when problems at these institutions present themselves... the State then takes direct steps in an attempt to eradicate a problem. In some instances, temporary closure of the institution and government taking charge of re-admissions of students...(p. 4)

Oliver pointed out that interference was not a systematic control or intervention policy model; rather, interference occurred when higher education institutions opposed the State's development path. In *state control*, the intervention was either political or bureaucratic control, while in *state interference*, university autonomy was the official policy.

The case of UNIMA before 1994 was that the State authority controlled most functions of UNIMA, including governance, finance, the appointment and enumeration of members of staff, the curriculum and student entry conditions. The findings of the study implied that the State control over UNIMA, as evident in the post-1994 era, had lessened and had become more flexible, suggesting a move from the *state-control* model towards the *state-supervising* model. For example, in the selection of students,

the selection process was undertaken entirely by UNIMA and the role of government was to make sure that the best candidates were selected rather than someone who had some higher authority connection. Similarly, UNIMA, through the Principals in the colleges, maintained discipline in the colleges and the role of government was to ensure good discipline at all institutions.

However, it might take some time before UNIMA fully experiences the attributes of a state-supervising model. As noted by Li (1998), “to practice the state-supervising model, there have to be rules for both the state and individual institutions to follow, whether as a supervisor or arbiter to oversee the operation of higher education or as players in the game” (p. 240). As was noted earlier, the absence of a Commission for Higher Education in Malawi suggested that there were no legal rules to regulate both the State and UNIMA.

6.8.1.3 Clark’s (1983) Triangle of Coordination

Using Clark’s (1983) three forces model of *state authority*, *academic oligarchy*, and *market forces*, Omari (1994) located higher education in several Eastern and Southern countries in Africa (Figure 2.3). Malawi was located in the *state authority* corner, suggesting that higher education was mainly influenced by state authority. The findings of this study showed that, by applying Clarks’ (1983) triangle of coordination, and Omari’s (1994) triangle of authority in the university system, the situation of the Malawian higher education system in the two political eras (pre-1994 and post-1994) fell into different positions in the triangle. For the pre-1994 period, the study reflected Omari’s findings that authority in the university system of the entire East and Southern

African countries (including Malawi) were mainly influenced by the State, with academic oligarchy exerting some influence. Market forces were absent.

However, the developments since the political changes that occurred in Malawi since 1994 provide evidence that higher education systems in Malawi is shifting from the *state authority* corner towards the *market forces* corner, as shown in Figure 6.2. The evidence for this shift is the proliferation of private universities since 1994, and this trend is likely to continue. Amonoo-Neizer (1998) observed that dealing with social demand for access to universities was the most difficult task faced by African universities. Escalating population growth, rapidly rising numbers of secondary school graduates, and persistent economic stagnation, all exerted a lot of pressure on governments to expand access to universities. Since 1994, when Malawi introduced free primary education and liberalized secondary school education by allowing private entrepreneurs to open schools throughout the country, the rapidly rising numbers of secondary school graduates increased pressure for more universities and by 2006, the country had four private universities.

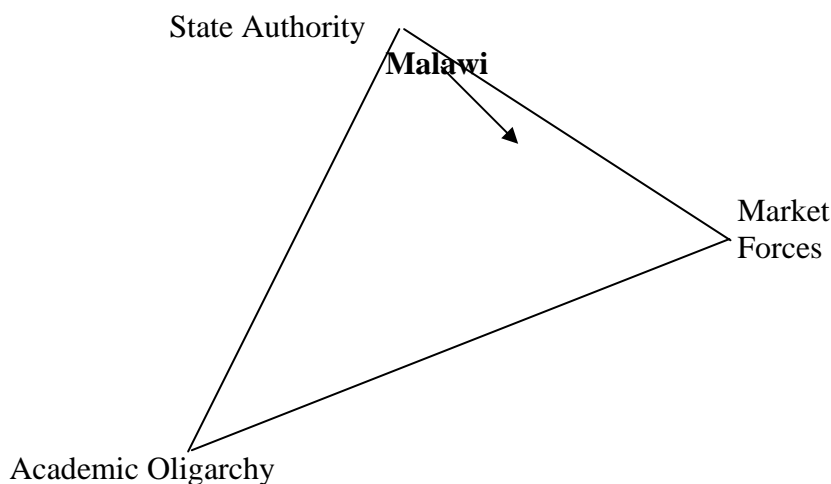


Figure 6.1: The Movement of Malawian Higher Education on Clark's Triangle of Coordination.
Note: Adapted from Omari (1991) and Li (1998) diagrams.

Being totally independent of government funding, the private universities are likely to be more autonomous than UNIMA. Private universities also offer a way of diversification without adding to government costs. The yet-to-be-established Council for Higher Education will assume the role of higher education supervision in Malawi by accrediting the universities. This development is likely to result in giving aspiring students the option to choose among a number of institutions or to fashion new arrangements suited to their own situation and taste. Ergon-Polak (2002) observed:

In this process, higher education is viewed as an economic sector with some of its institutions acting globally as large multinationals, and are localizing, franchising, exporting places by importing students, designing global marketing strategies, selling consulting services and setting up profit centres for generation for generating revenue while at the same time building international alliances and networks. (p. 5)

Even though it will take a long time to achieve this level of globalization for Malawian higher education institutions, there are indications that suggest that this is the direction in which UNIMA is going. For example, after having been in operation for only 15 years, the College of Medicine is already attracting students from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. All the colleges have established international alliances and networks with a number of universities in Europe and North America, for example, in student and staff exchange programmes.

The failure of government to sufficiently fund UNIMA due to the increases in other demands on the state budget is likely to subject higher education to the market forces of demand and supply, student fees, etc. This development is likely to lessen UNIMA's pressure on government for funding as it would then be possible to raise the needed funding through the charging of commercial fees and UNIMA would have greater freedom to operate as a truly autonomous university. The researcher did not

investigate the influence of academic oligarchy on UNIMA to substantiate the Omari's (1994) observation that academic oligarchy exerted some influence.

6.8.1.4 Watt's (1992) Views of the Role of the University

Examining the development of higher education in Malawi through Watts' (1992) views of the role of the university within society (the *instrumental*, the *autonomist* and the *mutually interdependent views*) the findings suggested that government followed the instrumental view. As observed by Ishumi (1990), Ajayi et al., (1996) and Siwela (1999), African universities were established to train indigenous personnel to replace colonial administrators in civil service and parastatals, and UNIMA was no exception. At the time of the study, UNIMA graduates were in most senior positions in both government and private organizations throughout Malawi; thus, UNIMA had achieved one of its original objectives that of becoming a training centre for professional personnel needed for national development (*Interview 24*).

6.8.2 Implications for Research

This study focused on institutional autonomy in UNIMA and specifically investigated government's involvement in the governance of the university, and the university's autonomy in the aspects of administrative, financial, personnel, academic, and student matters. Data for the study were collected through utilizing *three* sources of information: 44 *semi-structured interviews* (with administrators of UNIMA, senior government officials, Members of Parliament, senior officials of regulatory bodies and senior administrators of another public university, MZUNI), a *brief survey* on 24 respondents and *documentary/publication reviews*.

Government-university relations are important in the study of university autonomy. Even though some government officials were interviewed, a wider cross section of government officials would be needed to validate the information. For example, only one senior official in each case was interviewed from the Ministry of Finance (Treasury) and Department of Human Resources Management and Development (DHRM & D); and only two from UNIMA's parent ministry, Education. Additional interviewees would have provided opportunities for triangulation of the government responses. Of the external influences, Alumni views would have provided another perspective to autonomy in UNIMA, but this was not possible as the incumbent Alumni serving on University Council had since passed away and had, as yet, not been replaced.

Another observation was that since there were a number of outside players who influenced autonomy in the university, as indicated in Figure 4.5 (government, regulatory bodies, political influence, and other 'new' universities), a round-table discussion group, made up of a representative sample of the sections represented in the study, to discuss UNIMA's autonomy and governance, would have been a useful research strategy. However, this option was difficult to operationalize due the busy schedules of the concerned parties.

UNIMA was a university in transition in that, since its initiation in 1994 of multi-party politics, the university had experienced (and was still experiencing) a number of changes including decentralization of some of the hitherto University Office decisions to constituent colleges. The manner in which the original 1965-UNIMA was administered was therefore different from the way the 2005-UNIMA is being

administered, and since these changes are still ongoing, it is highly probable that the 2010-UNIMA will be different. For instance, one of the constituent colleges, Bunda College of Agriculture, had proposed a change of its name to Bunda College because, in addition to specializing in agriculture, the college has moved on to other business related activities in response to the changing needs of the Malawians (The National News, 2006). Factors that affected the autonomy of UNIMA at the time of this study were therefore different from those of 1965, and may likely not be the same in 2010. Consequently, changes in the governance of Malawi are likely to have an impact upon the nature of autonomy in UNIMA. Based on the foregoing thesis, the study of autonomy at UNIMA can be an on-going exercise, and hence, the researcher suggests *longitudinal studies* in three to five years' time to ascertain the extent of autonomy.

In addition, with the full knowledge of the *age* difference between the two national universities, UNIMA and MZUNI, a comparative study of autonomy in the two universities would be an interesting one. MZUNI seems to be growing rapidly, from a single faculty in 1999 with 120 students, to five faculties in 2006, with a student population of over 1000. UNIMA can learn some valuable lessons.

Another possibility would be to investigate the issue of autonomy in Malawian universities and some selected African universities in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa (Botswana, Kenya, Zambia or Zimbabwe). As was indicated in the study, since these universities share similar initial developmental characteristics, it would make an interesting study to determine and compare the extent of governmental influence on university governance in selected public universities years after being independent from the colonial ruler, Great Britain. An investigation of UNIMA's autonomy, compared to

that of some selected western universities (Europe or North America), would bring out the cultural and political differences, and this would likely be beneficial to higher education scholars in both Africa and the developed world.

6.8.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

This study has shown that there are several policy issues that need to be addressed in higher education institutions in Africa. In Malawi, for example, the liberalization of the education sector saw the coming of *private* universities and this put UNIMA under pressure to change its mode of operation. Since 1994, the tertiary education field in Malawi has become increasingly crowded and it can be envisaged that the Malawian higher education arena will be faced with increasing competition among the emerging universities for students, research funds, and academic staff. Even Government challenged the tertiary education sector in Malawi to re-orient the country's education and reflect industry needs that will enhance economic growth and development (*The National News*, 2006). Faced with such complex environmental changes, direct management by Government needs to be re-assessed, since higher education institutions need to be independent and dynamic in order to respond to such competition.

The university's contributions to the economic success of Malawi are vital since they are expected to create knowledge and educate the *future* leaders of the country. The study showed that government funding played a major role in the running of UNIMA, but that it was important to diversify the sources of funding. In terms of funding, government needs to reconsider the current *cash budget* system of funding to UNIMA; the system is not ideal for planning purposes in the institutions of higher education

(*Interview 15*). In order to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing environment, institutions need to have three to five year strategic plans and funding should be an assumed variable. The allocation of the public funds to UNIMA should, therefore, be in an annual *lump-sum* form as opposed to a monthly allocation. Once the funds are allocated, UNIMA needs to gain greater freedom to decide how to use them in the most efficient and effective way. However, since these are public funds, government should seek accountability, linking funding to performance as observed by Siwela (1999).

In terms of diversification for funding, UNIMA needs to explore more sources in addition to the funding from government. For example, funding from Alumni is clearly not tapped, and more businesses in Malawi need to be encouraged to assist in funding programmes run in the University. After all, most of the companies in Malawi are now ran by Alumni of UNIMA. According to one of the recommendations by MIM Report (1997), this is one of the functions of the Marketing and Public Relations Officer of the *reorganized* University Office. The possibility of more direct involvement by Malawi-based business organizations should be further explored for partnership development and indications were that organizations were willing to get involved if only they were approached (*Interview 14*).

Further, the membership of the governing Council of higher education institutions should include both *internal* (academic) and *external* (industry) members. Those in senior leadership positions, according to OECD (2003), should be selected based upon their leadership skills, in addition to their academic expertise, in order to guide the institution towards achievement of its stated mission. UNIMA Council needed

to incorporate external members in order to encourage the university's interaction with the external environment.

The basic assumption made by this researcher based on these findings is that an institution of higher education can better function under an autonomous board, rather than under the control of the government. Based on this premise, granting autonomy to a board can enable flexible administrative and financial decision-making, thus ensuring efficiency in overall operations of the institution. Even though the study showed that UNIMA Council was autonomous in a number of areas, it fell short in financial autonomy by being too dependent on government funding. This dependence on government affected the execution of a number of programmes in pursuit of its mission: *the advancement of knowledge, promotion of wisdom and understanding and provision of services by engaging in teaching and research and facilitating the dissemination, promotion, and preservation of learning responsive to the needs of Malawi and the world* (UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2005-2010).

The findings of the study have raised a number of practical applications for institutional autonomy of universities in Africa:

1. Government has a role to play in the governing of academic institutions. The state supervising model (Neave and Van Vught, 1994) is advantageous in that, while institutions could revert to government for financial assistance when they were in dire need, government could also intervene in the institutions' affairs to ensure that objectives of national interest are being met. Thus, governments can ensure that public universities serve the public interest, providing those elements of higher education that would be lacking if left to a free market. This would also promote

equality and support those areas of basic research relevant to the country's needs. To this end, the Commissions for Higher Education are necessary to mediate relationship between government and universities and its absence in Malawi was regrettable. It is therefore imperative that such a commission be established in Malawi as a matter of urgency.

2. Universities are protected against the arbitrary interference by externals through academic freedom (for academicians) and university autonomy (for institutions), which are conventionally underwritten by formal legislative enactment (CHE, South Africa, 2001). University autonomy (the capacity for self-government) has to be balanced with the university's obligation to be accountable to society with respect to equity and efficiency in fulfilling the educational mission (Neave, 1998). University autonomy and academic freedom have to be balanced to ensure academic excellence, innovation and knowledge advancement (CHE, South Africa, 2001). In the sixties and seventies, most institutions of higher learning in Africa failed to uphold academic freedom, and this landed many academicians in prison and/or in exile. The situation in Malawi was not different (Kerr & Mapanje, 2002). The tendency of government to interfere in the autonomy of universities on the African continent and, in the process, turn these universities into virtual government departments, has resulted in the institutions becoming too dependent on government and less innovative to become financially independent from government. At the time of the study, the situation in Malawi had changed in that some freedom was being experienced, but more can and should be done.

3. *Political interference* plays a big role in governance of higher education institutions in Africa. There is a tendency to practice politics of appeasement in that politicians are appointed to administrative positions in higher education institutions without the requisite qualifications. Such actions need to be abolished. Any appointments to any position should be based only on qualification and experience so that such appointees give proper guidance to the institutions towards the achievement of their mission. Politicians have a role to play in the governance of such higher education institutions, and Malawi has politicians who can effectively play this role. Political appeasement has no place in higher education management.
4. The constitution of most of the universities in Africa state that ... “*the Head of State shall be the chancellor of the university*” (UNIMA Act). Further, the Malawi experience was that the Head of State was Chancellor of both public universities (UNIMA and MZUNI). While this might work to the advantage of the institution in times of financial need, it is difficult for the Head of State to balance the political and the academic roles. The hectic political life of a Head of State will not do justice to the roles that expected of a chancellor (*ceremonial, pastoral, scholarly, and ambassadorial*). In addition, the Chancellor’s role conflicts with the political role in that every Head of State belongs to a specific political party and as such is likely to practice partisan politics in certain issues. The suggestion is, therefore, to allow the Head of State to function as such and appoint a politically neutral, but adequately qualified individual to be Chancellor. In the case of Malawi, two chancellors would have to be appointed to head the two public universities.

5. The membership of the University Council, which guides the university towards the achievement of its mission, is vital. *First*, there is need for a reduced government representation, and membership should be restricted to the ministries responsible for higher education and finance. In Malawi, three ministries serve on the Council: Finance, Education and Human Resources Management and Development. Movement to a situation where the membership of Council is not heavily biased towards government representation and where the Head of State is no longer the Chancellor will reduce the likelihood of government interference in the affairs of the university, and thus, provide for more autonomous universities. *Second*, Siwela (1999) observed that there was also a need to balance the membership that was drawn from external and internal sources, and the majority should come from outside. Amonoo-Neizer (1998) pointed out that representation from internal and external sources facilitated interaction with civic and business communities and enabled their experiences to bear on university activities. Such benefits promoted innovation and entrepreneurialship required for universities in Africa. The UNIMA Council membership, at the time of this study, was devoid of such external representation. UNIMA should open up and allow for external contributions at the highest level of policy making.
6. One of the findings of the study was the constraint of UNIMA in terms of its ability to finance itself without being excessively dependent on government. One of the suggestions is for UNIMA to provide additional and creative ways of funding. Therefore, like many universities in Africa, there is need for institutional reforms in UNIMA and Makerere University in Uganda is a *living* example in the reformation

process: “Driven by the 1992 Government of Uganda Education Policy White Paper and national policies of liberalization, privatization and liberalization, privatization and decentralization, Makerere University today is a university in transition” (Musisi & Muwanga, 2001, n.p.). Having been granted *autonomy* by government, combined with leadership and vision, Makerere adopted policies that turned around the university back to its former glory. As observed by Musisi and Muwanga (2001):

The start of institutional reforms of Makerere dates from 1992, with the recognition of greater autonomy and adoption of market orientation... President Museveni announced that he planned to step down as the university’s chancellor and that government was willing to respond positively to university demands for greater autonomy, provided that they took on some of the responsibility for raising funds for their programmes... In the same year, for the first time the government allowed the university to charge fees to students in evening courses and other special courses (n.p.).

Such reforms as the adoption of a market orientation, the head of state stepping down as chancellor and the charging of fees for courses consolidated the autonomy government granted to the university. Universities in Africa need to emulate the Makerere reformation process in order to improve the status of their national universities.

7. Government’s ability to continue financing higher education in most African countries is limited due to the dwindling of the national fortunes, the realities of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and general economic deterioration (Odebiyi & Aina (1997). In the early nineties, most African states adopted fiscal policies to revive their economies and governments extended these policies to the management of universities (Siwela, 1999). In addition to government funding, Siwela further

suggested that universities should be encouraged to diversify the generation of revenue for the institution through alternative sources:

- cost-sharing through the introduction of tuition fees
- consultancies and commissioned research
- sale of excess capacity that may be available especially during vacations (rental of lecture rooms, dormitories, vehicle, etc)
- fund raising through endowments and alumni associations
- establishing independently run and effectively managed joint commercial ventures (p. 6).

With the autonomy to implement any or a combination of these alternatives, a university can be less dependent on the government for its financial requirements. At the time of this study, UNIMA had implemented all (except alumni associations) of these alternatives with minimal success, as the generated funds contributed only two per cent of the annual budgetary requirements. There was more to be done by the Marketing and the Public Relations Officer (MIM Report, 1997) to better coordinate the income-generating activities of UNIMA.

8. The success of MZUNI should send UNIMA administrators back to the drawing board in order to resuscitate the discussions on whether or not each of the constituent colleges of UNIMA can become universities in their own right. If this were to be the case, the number of public universities would rise from the two to six. The UNIMA constituent colleges have their infrastructures already in place and the colleges have already been enjoying some *limited* autonomy as a result of the decentralization of some decisions from the University Office. The constituent colleges have benefited from the newly acquired autonomy in terms of the speed at which decisions can be implemented at the college level and to the extent that some have questioned the relevance of the central office after this decentralization

(Interview 28, ExtInterview 6). UNIMA would have to undertake some administrative re-organization at the college level, introducing new offices of Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and the rest of the administrative positions for each of the five constituent colleges. Arguably, this change would call for more funding from Government, but if the new universities were to be given more financial autonomy, there would be a possibility of a repeat of the MZUNI success story, as the new universities would operate like private universities under the *state supervision* model.

6.9 Conceptual Framework Revisited

The conceptual framework, as depicted in Table 2.2, served to identify institutional autonomy as it was operationalized in UNIMA. It defined university autonomy along two dimensions: the extent of centralization of decision-making (*extent of autonomy*) and the various decision areas (governance, administration, finance, academic, personnel, and student matters) relevant to university autonomy (*nature of autonomy*). The extent of autonomy was defined on a continuum, ranging from highly centralized to highly decentralized. This arrangement formed a 4x6 matrix (a total of twenty-four cells) and the parameters of each cell were defined with respect to the decision area.

In its present form, however, the framework assumes a rather rigid view of autonomy and implies that an institution can fit the prescribed definition. Tapper and Salter (1995) observed that institutional autonomy was not a constant over time, but rather, a boundary condition among university, government and society, which was capable of being modified and redefined. UNIMA was an institution in transition, and

as such, more legislation and revisions of the university constitution was likely to widen its scope of influence in decision making, hence making it more autonomous. Such developments would shift the cell in which a particular university was operating. For example, under the decision area of governance, the results of the study matched the descriptive parameters under *predominantly decentralized* (governance through Council, appointed by government, but not subservient to government). This, according to the researcher's interpretations of the results, fit the UNIMA situation, and represented a move away from that of *predominantly centralized* situation (governance through Council, consisting of government's appointees, primarily carrying out orders) that existed before 1994. Over time, *higher decentralization* could be possible, where Council would be independently constituted and making independent decisions on the running of UNIMA.

As a guiding tool, the conceptual framework was useful and assisted in determining the extent of autonomy of UNIMA by identifying the cell in which each of the decision areas fell into as was shown in Table 6.1. The decision to place a particular decision area under a specific column on the continuum was highly subjective, based on the responses from the research participants and can be challenged by another researcher conducting a similar study. However, the allocations in Table 6.1 were reviewed and approved by the researcher's advisors at the University of Saskatchewan. Despite this shortcoming, the framework generally assisted in observing the thesis that, at the time of the study, government's grip on influencing UNIMA's decisions was relenting from that of pre-1994, and was moving towards decentralization, especially in administration, personnel and student matters.

6.10 Synthesis and Concluding Comments

This study revealed that, in terms of governance, the stance of Government towards UNIMA, which existed prior to 1994, was changing from *state authority* to *market forces* (Clark, 1983). In terms of UNIMA charging commercial fees in an effort to enjoy greater financial autonomy, Government had a legitimate role to take care of the public interest in higher education in making it affordable to every Malawian, but the general feeling, including reports on what the parliament would prefer, was that UNIMA should be given the autonomy to introduce commercial fees and that government should assist those who cannot afford to pay by offering them bursaries or scholarships. Unfortunately, the students loan system, which was in operation at the time of this study, was hugely abused by students and needed revamping. On the other hand

The study further showed that the State had eased its grip on UNIMA in the *five* areas: governance, administrative matters, personnel matters, academic matters and student matters, allowing UNIMA to operate independent of the State influence. However, since Government was the main source of funding for UNIMA, it influenced the financially-related decisions and this had an adverse effect on the extent of UNIMA's autonomy in the other *five* areas of the study.

With its government's stance on public interest, and despite the current growth of private higher education institutions in Malawi, UNIMA, with its established infrastructure, will still continue to educate a large proportion of the Malawian student population. The public, supported by the politicians, will expect this and accept the government's stance in defining and working towards the public interest. Unless

UNIMA convinces Government (and the politicians) of a new formula to finance itself other than depending on Government as is the case, the funding role of the State will remain significant and this will affect UNIMA's stride towards more autonomy. Even though Government spending on higher education has been diminishing, UNIMA finds it impossible to operate without State funding. The Government is under pressure to increase funding to UNIMA. The Parliamentary Committee on Education lobbied Parliament for more funding to UNIMA, but given the fact that there were other institutions and departments in Government that also needed funding and that the financial portfolio was restricted, there was an escalating level of competition for funding.

Higher education is still of national importance in Malawi and its place in the national economy continues to grow. Despite the funding difficulties experienced with the two public universities, UNIMA and MZUNI, government was in the process of establishing yet another public university, to specialize in Science and Technology to be located in the central region of Malawi (*The Nation*, 2006). Thus, Government would still spend more on higher education and allocate more money to student loans and bursaries for those who cannot afford. Due to this major funding role, Governments' interest in knowing what UNIMA does with public funds is inevitable. Just as Government is accountable to the general public, UNIMA has to be accountable to Government. The Ministry of Education and the yet to be established Commission for Higher Education will be instrumental to ensuring that both private and public institutions achieve the expected educational standards in the higher education institutions in Malawi.

Higher education is necessary in Malawi for the country's developmental efforts. As such, ensuring access to qualified students from poor families is likely to continue requiring government attention and intervention, otherwise levying user fees on those who cannot afford will lead to many qualified students missing university places due to inability to meet costs. Government needs to categorize the students: the *extremely needy* would be awarded scholarships, while the *needy* would be given loans and those who could afford tuition would be required to pay the full fee. The current loan scheme being operated by UNIMA needs revamping as almost all students signed for a student loan. Government took the position that since the students were getting loans, UNIMA's actual subvention was the approved subvention less the amount of the student loans. This led to UNIMA being poorly funded because Government (through the Ministry of Education) did not pay the money to finance the loan.

Loan repayment from those who had benefited from the student loan during their *academic life* did not exist, as there was no paper trail to follow-up, and the beneficiaries were happy to get away scot-free. UNIMA administration should be criticized for failure to properly manage the loan scheme on two accounts: *first*, allowing all students, irrespective of their financial status, to sign-up for the student loan and *second*, the absence of paper trail. The onus was on UNIMA to institute an *air-tight* loan repayment system after the graduation of each student. Based on this experience, revamping the process will require a separate body, independent of UNIMA, to administer the student loan. Government would transfer the loan funds to this body and students would access the loans through this body. This would be part of UNIMA's efforts to outsource the non-core activities, as recommended by the MIM Report (1997).

Reforms are needed in the involvement of government in UNIMA governance. There is a need to re-examine and set clear objectives for university education in Malawi (for both public and private) and the Commission for Higher Education will be instrumental in this case. The interviews indicated that government supported plans to re-orient the country's education system to reflect industrial needs that enhance economic growth and development. It is also necessary to revise the University Act in accordance with the current reforms and emphasize on efficient utilization of resources at UNIMA.

On reflection, the findings suggest that government has *three* roles, which translate into reasons for its intervention in UNIMA. *First*, government intervened in the affairs of UNIMA when there were issues of *national interest*. As was mentioned earlier, most universities in Africa, including UNIMA, were established in the 1960s and early 1970s shortly after attaining independence to train indigenous manpower to replace expatriate administrators in civil service and parastatals (Siwela, 1999). As such, university education in the newly independent African states was accorded high priority in budgetary allocation in the education sector. Government did not tolerate UNIMA teaching certain courses which were irrelevant for a developing country like Malawi (*ExtInterview 6*). Western universities may pursue knowledge for its own sake and may teach certain courses that benefit individuals but not the whole country. However, for a developing country like Malawi, government promoted courses that 'produced' more teachers, lawyers, engineers, and doctors, who would, in turn, assist in the development of the country. Universities were expected to identify what was relevant and respond to the needs of the nation.

The *second* reason for government involvement in UNIMA concerned *equity*, to ensure that low-income students are not disadvantaged. Government's main concern is to ensure equality of opportunities for university education for all Malawians. This is achieved through the regulation and control of the higher education sector so that it can be afforded by all Malawians who were qualified to enter university, regardless of their social-economic status, ethnic origins, religious affiliation or gender. Government's argument for this control was that there were students from poor families who were intelligent, but too poor to afford tuition fees. With such cases in mind, the government intervened to ensure that such students were not marginalized as a result of the exorbitant level of fees that would be charged; thus, interests of vulnerable groups were protected.

Leaving the provision of education in private sector would adversely affect the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of the population and this would be against the national policy objectives and social goals of ensuring access and catering to the needs of poor students. Thus, policy makers have felt an overwhelming need for the public sector to continue to play a role in the delivery of education, so that the needs of the poor and disadvantaged takes primacy over the needs of all other segments of the population. As a public university, UNIMA was committed to these public service and equity goals (*ExtInterview 6*).

The *third* reason for government intervention is that higher education produces wider social and economic benefits than those captured directly by the individuals involved (*social capital*), and that without government subsidy, there would be under-investment in higher education (OECD, 2003). This fact was reflected in UNIMA

through the fee structure. Those students on government scholarship paid a nominal financial contribution (MK20,000), while the rest paid nearly three times more (MK67,000). However, this figure was much less than the fees charged by the private universities (MK350,000); thus, government subsidy made higher education more affordable to a larger section of the population.

In many countries, the political position is that education is a basic human right, and therefore, a direct obligation of governments. This implies that governments cannot withdraw from the provision of education. However, the argument is that governments should restrict themselves to the financing of universities and not get into the actual provision of administration of the institutions. This preposition has been difficult to uphold, as *he who pays the piper calls the tune* syndrome has persisted in most situations. Further, governments have national policy objectives and social goals, such as ensuring equal access to education and catering for the educational needs of the poor but academically acceptable students. Bearing in mind that those with the ability to pay always have recourse to alternative university options, government has to look into the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

The degree of university autonomy in the operations of the university is associated with costs (Govindaraj, et. al, 1996). Effectiveness in the context of autonomy does not imply absence of controls and regulations. The absence of appropriate regulations and accountability can lead to abuses of power (or system) and overall poor performance, which can be costly to the institution and to government. Accountability is always important and its relevance is the effect of the degree of autonomy in the performance of the university operations. The fact that there was no

interference from Government in the day-to-day management of the post-1994 UNIMA was a giant leap forward from the pre-1994 situation, when Government got itself entangled with the administration of the University, especially from the political angle. The political developments since 1994 gave a chance to UNIMA to experience some autonomy in those areas where the Government did not intervene. Through Commission for Higher Education (CHE), limits to Government involvement in higher education matters will be outlined. In performing the *supervisory* role, Government needed to note that too much *state control* was likely to suppress instead of enhance good governance in the higher education sector. Thus, the current scenario of keeping some distance from the daily activities of UNIMA is a good start, but more is expected.

The University Act needs to be revisited with the view to redress issues such as the State President being the Chancellor of the university, political interference, appointments of council members by government, and the control on fee structure at UNIMA, which would greatly enhance the autonomy of UNIMA.

Autonomy has to encompass a total culture within UNIMA and for it to succeed, UNIMA needs a culture of ownership and commitment at all levels: Council, the university leadership, key administrative staff, and an active involvement of faculty (Shanmugaratnam, 2004). To take advantage of greater autonomy, both the University Council and management of the university should be given greater responsibility and leadership to steer UNIMA forward to achieve greater excellence. The Council, top management and faculty need to play greater and more active roles in providing strategic and financial oversight over UNIMA.

There were considerable benefits in UNIMA becoming autonomous but still being a publicly funded university so that it could be quick to respond to market changes, and to achieve quality and excellence. Access to university education to qualified Malawian students should not be impaired. Malawi is a small country and, as such, people are the nation's most important resource. Therefore, it is important that every student who can benefit from university education is given the opportunity to study at UNIMA. A student's lack of funds should not be an obstacle to attending university. To this end, UNIMA will have to devise and implement aggressive financial aid schemes so that the most qualified students are admitted, regardless of their family backgrounds or their ability to pay the tuition.

6.11 Reflection on the Process

Malawi was under a one-party rule for thirty years since being granted independence from Britain in 1964. Malawi was then ruled by one president, who had a tight grip on political activities in the country. During this period, it was politically risky to get involved in issues that seemed to criticize the Government because one would risk imprisonment. Addressing a topic such as *university autonomy* was looked at as 'attacking' the Government's involvement in the running of UNIMA and as such, such topics were better left untouched. Furthermore, it was very difficult to get individuals to be interviewed on such topics, let alone record the interviews. Malawians mistrusted each other, in case he/she was a government informant.

The turning point was in the referendum of 1993 which ushered in a multi-party government in 1994. The interviewer was pleasantly surprised with the change of attitude of Malawians towards each other as they freely expressed their opinion. The

climate in which Malawians are operating now seems to be one of trust. Trust is fundamental to autonomy, as one will have autonomy if he/she is trusted. In my opinion, all the interviewees (including the government officials) exhibited the trust element by being open to the interviewer and, in the process, they identified the issues connected to UNIMA's institutional autonomy without fear of the pre-1994 politics of retribution.

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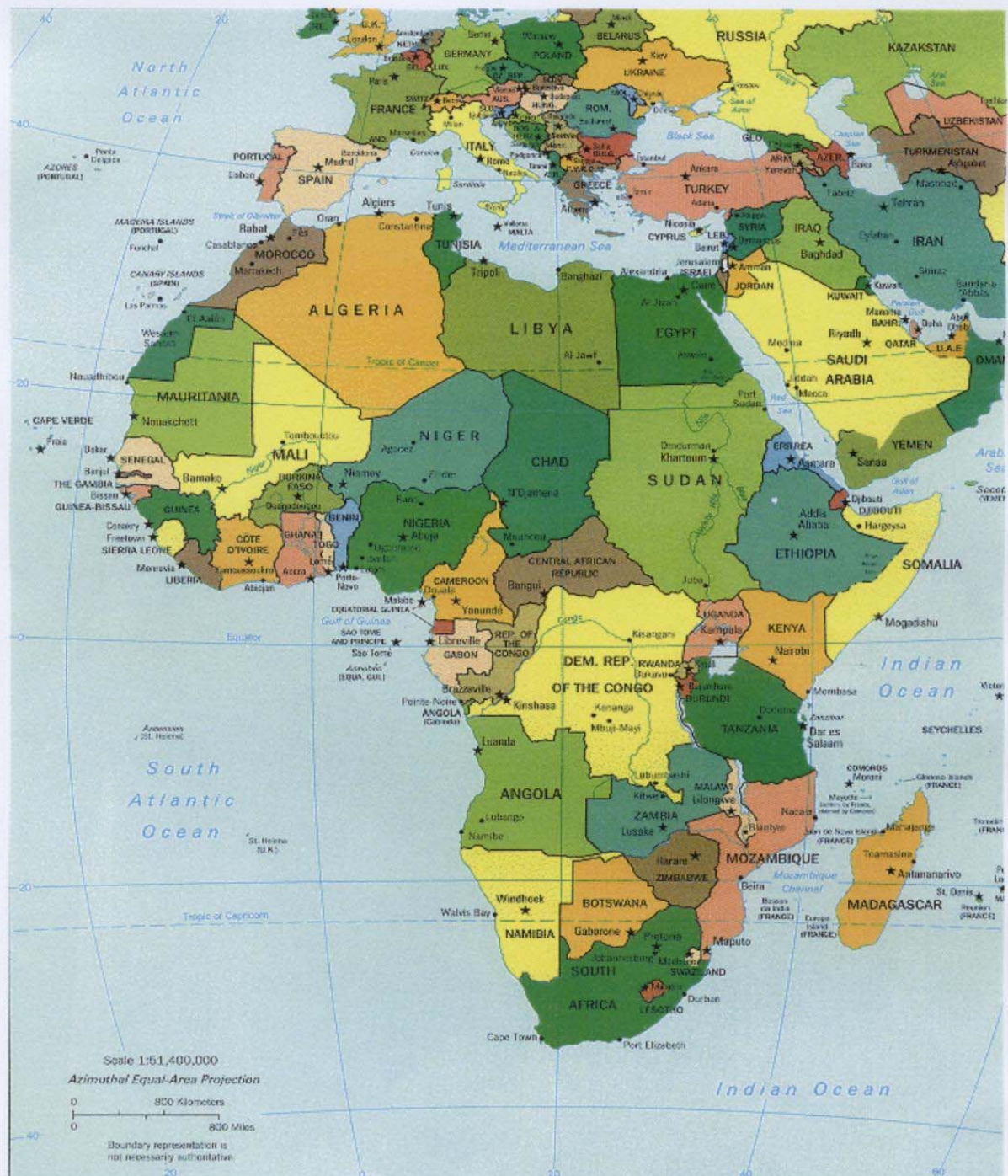
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APPENDIX A

Map the Continent of Africa, showing the location of Malawi with respect to the rest of the African Countries



APPENDIX B

Application for Approval of Research Protocol: Researcher's Summary

- 1 **Name of Researcher and Supervisor:**
 - 1a. *Eric James Sankhulani* (Ph.D Candidate)
Dr. Patrick Renihan (Advisor), Department of Educational Administration,
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.
 - 1b. Anticipated dates of the research study: October 2004 – January 2005.
2. **Title of Study:** The Nature of the Institutional Autonomy in the University of Malawi.
3. **Abstract:** The purpose of the study is to investigate the nature of University of Malawi governance. Specifically, it will examine institutional autonomy in the five constituent colleges, which make up the University of Malawi. The basic purpose of the study will be addressed through answers to the questions on:
 - To what extent does the government involve itself in the management of the university?
 - To what extent does the university have autonomy or freedom in the appointment of academic and administrative leaders at different levels, and in the recruitment of faculty and staff members?
 - How much autonomy does the university have in determining the academic disciplines and programmes offered and granting the diplomas or certificates to graduates?
 - To what extent does the university have freedom in student enrollment?
 - To what degree does the university have power to allocate funds allocated by the State or those collected on its own?Data will be collected through interviews (field visits to the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi), document reviews, and observation.
4. **Funding:** This is an unfunded study; however College of Education and Graduate Office will provide some travel funding.
5. **Participants:** The sample of this study (about 25 persons) will be purposefully selected from the University of Malawi community. I will first seek for permission to conduct the interviews in the University of Malawi (*please refer to Appendix B*). Assuming the permission is granted, I plan to seek the assistance of the University Registrar, to identify a cross-section of participants from the civil service in the Ministry of Education, University Council, University Office, the Principals, Deans and Heads of Department from the five Colleges. Before the interviews, the participants will receive a letter that

describes the nature and purpose of the study, and ask for their consent to participate in the study (*please refer to Appendix C*). There are no risks to the participants or deception of the subjects for this study.

5. (a) **Sample of Recruitment Material:** Pursuant to guidelines of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research, sample copies of recruitment material have not been provided. However, there

are

sections in Appendices B and C (*please refer to paragraphs in Appendices B and C*).

- 6a. **Signed Consent:** A letter of consent will be provided to each participant at the beginning of the interview. The participant will indicate his or her willingness to participate through a signature. The letters will indicate the purpose of the study, the approximate time it will take, and how anonymity will be maintained. The letter of consent will include the individual's right to withdraw from the study at any time and also ensure the right of confidentiality (*please refer to Appendix*

D).

- 6b. **Permission from Outside Body:** Since I will be visiting the University Office and its constituent Colleges frequently, it will be necessary to seek for permission

to conduct the research from the Vice Chancellor, who is the chief executive of the University of Malawi (*please refer to Appendix B*).

- 6c. **Assent:** This will not be an issue in this study as all likely candidates will be adults.

- 6d. **Dependency Relationships:** The researcher is an employee of the University of Malawi. Some of the participants may be his colleagues either as former classmates or presently fellow employees. However, as those to be interviewed are likely to be administratively more senior than the researcher, the potential participants may not feel pressured to participate. Furthermore, they will be reminded that participation is voluntary and that no penalty for not participating (*please refer to Appendix D*).

- 6e. **Inability to Provide Consent Due to Impairment:** No impairments are foreseen

that may inhibit participants' abilities to grant the researcher informed consent.

- 6f. **Naturalistic-Observation Consent:** One of the methods of the methods of data collection in this study will be observation, when the researcher will visit the sites

and (hopefully) observe management meetings in progress. Thus, consent will be

sought from the Vice Chancellor to observe meetings in progress (*please refer to*

Appendix B).

6g. **Pre-Established Participant Group:** No pre-established participant groups that may coerce participation are foreseen or known to exist.

7. **Methods and Procedures:** Three methods for the collection of research data will be used.

First, semi-structured interview will be conducted with relevant administrators at different levels in the University of Malawi as outlined in paragraph 5 above. Pre-set interview guides will be used during the interviews for the various levels in the university hierarchy (*please refer to Appendix E*). These interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed at a late stage. I will also

administer questionnaires, which, basically will address similar issues as those discussed in the interviews (*please refer to Appendix F*). To ensure that the procedures are conducted with respect and consideration for the individuals involved in the study, participants will be informed as to the nature of the study and will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

Second, various documents will be collected for the purpose of investigating the research topic. They will include university documents and publications, government directives, directives and regulations from the educational administration of various levels, and institutional reports and files.

Third, on-site, direct observation will be used as a supplementary method to provide additional information about the research topic. Observation will take place at the time the researcher will visit the sites of the scheduled interviews.

7b. **Overall Research Process:** After the Ethics Committee has approved my research proposal, I plan to travel to Malawi to conduct this study. Upon arrival in

Malawi, I intend to:

- Report at the University Office, for a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor, to communicate my intentions, including requesting for a blanket approval to visit and interview the yet to be identified participants in the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. Possibility of observing management meetings in progress will also be raised. This will be necessary for gaining entry into the Colleges.
- I shall also hold discussions logistics of my visits with the Principal of my College. This will be important for administrative assistance with secretarial work, transport, office space, etc.
- Using my College, I shall pilot the semi-structured interviews in the Malawian setting, for any unforeseen problems.

- Since the five sites are spread out, the visits to Colleges is likely to last at least four months.
8. **Storage of Data:** In accordance with the University Council directives of December 8, 1993, which were revised in February 21, 1994, all data (field notes, transcripts, printed electronic mail messages, and audio recordings) will be stored and retained by the department head for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan. Access to stored material will not be granted to outside individuals.
 9. **Dissemination of Results:** Results of this study will be presented to the College of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Saskatchewan by the researcher in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education Administration. The results may be published as an article in a scholarly journal or presented at a conference. In all cases, the identity of the participants will be protected.
 10. **Risk or Deception:** The risk involved in this study is minimal and there is no deception involved. Participation in this study is voluntary. There is one researcher who will be handling all information that will be collected. The interviews that will be audio-recorded will be performed in a closed environment to ensure confidentiality. Questionnaires and transcripts of the interviews will be secured stored by the researcher until the exercise is completed. Electronic mail messages used subsequent to the interviews will be sent from and received by personal password protected electronic mail accounts and data collected by the researcher will be stored on a protected University of Saskatchewan server for no longer than the study period.
 - 10a. **Vulnerable Populations:** The population to be studied is not seen as vulnerable.
 - 10b. **Captive or Dependent Populations:** The population to be studied is not captive or dependent.
 - 10c. **Institutional or Power Relationships:** There is a power relationship between the researcher and the University of Malawi, as he is a faculty member of the University (*please refer to paragraph 6d*).
 - 10d. **Association of Participants to Data File:** In all cases, the identity of participants will be protected.
 - 10e. **Loss of Confidentiality or Anonymity:** Procedures to maintain confidentiality or anonymity will be followed (*please refer to paragraphs 6a, 8 and 10*).

- 10f. **Audio- or Video-tape:** Audio-tapes will be used (*please refer to paragraph 8*).
- 10g. **Deception or Misled:** Participants will not be deceived or misled. Information regarding the nature of this study is presented to the participants in an introductory letter from the researcher prior to requests for consent (*please refer to paragraph 5, 5a, 7 and Appendix D*).
- 10h. **Discomfort:** The research methods employed by this study are not foreseen to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue or stress.
- 10i. **Personal and Sensitive Questions:** The researcher does not believe the nature of any questions to be asked will upset the participants (*please refer to Appendices E and F*). Furthermore, participants will be reminded that they are in no way obliged to answer all questions presented.
- 10j. **Embarrassment or Humiliation:** The researcher does not believe that the nature of any questions to be asked will induce embarrassment, humiliation, lower self-esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, distress, or any other negative emotional state (*please refer to Appendices E and F*). Furthermore, participants are reminded that they are in no way obliged to answer all questions presented.
- 10k. **Social Risk:** The researcher does not believe that participation within this study will involve a participant's loss of status, privacy or reputation.
- 10l. **Infringing on Rights of Participants:** The researcher will not restrict participants from any third party activities as a requirement of participation within this study.
- 10m. **Compensation:** Participation within this study is completely voluntary. A compensation for participation will be minimal (for example: a small souvenir - *key holder* - from Canada).
- 10n. **Predicted Harm:** No predicted harm will be experienced as a result of participation within this study.
11. **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study by using pseudonyms for the real names of the participants on tapes, transcripts analysis, and any written summaries that result from this study other than the consent related material (*please refer to Appendix D*).

All precautions will be taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants. All data

from interviews, electronic mail messages, etc. will be labeled with pseudonyms and safe storage will ensure that only the researcher and head of department will have access to the data, as is required by the University of Saskatchewan guidelines. After the 5-years mark, all data will be destroyed.

12. **Data/Transcript Release:** Each participant will be given the opportunity to review the abridged transcripts of their interview audio-recordings. Upon completion of review, each participant will be asked to sign a form (*please refer to Appendix G*) to indicate that they agree with what they said in the transcript or what they intended to say. Participants will have the right, upon receiving the transcript, to withdraw, change, or add to any or all of their responses.
13. **Debriefing and Feedback:** Upon request, the participants will be provided with an executive summary of the study following its completion. Furthermore, all participants will be informed about public access to the finished dissertation at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Malawi libraries.

14. **Required Signatures:**

Researcher: _____

Supervisor: _____

Department Head: _____

Date: _____

15. **Contact Information:**

Eric James Sankhulani
801-107 Cumberland Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 2R6

(306) 374-3885 (home)

(306) 966-7628 (office)

(306) 966-7020 (fax)

ejs736@mail.usask.ca (e-mail)

APPENDIX C

Request to the University of Malawi to Conduct the Study

801-107 Cumberland Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK. S7N 2R6

The Vice Chancellor
University of Malawi
P.O. Box 278, Zomba. MALAWI.

Dear Sir

Re: A STUDY ON THE NATURE OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI.

My name is ***Eric James Sankhulani***, a member of staff in the University of Malawi, the Polytechnic. I am currently working towards a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, in Canada. I write to request approval to proceed with my proposed research topic: ***The Nature of Autonomy in the University of Malawi***.

In this study, I will engage a selection of a few Council members and a number of administrators from the Government (those connected with the University of Malawi management), University Office staff and the Principals, Deans and Heads of Department from all the five constituent Colleges of the University of Malawi. I intend to personally visit all the six sites (the University Office and the five constituent Colleges). If necessary, I might also visit the Ministry of Education Headquarters.

I will be conducting semi-structured, one-to-one confidential interviews with the participants. During my visits to the six sites, I may also request to have access to any documentation that may be relevant to the study. If possible, I shall also appreciate attending some management meetings, as an observer. All the information gathered will be treated with strict confidence.

I look forward to your favourable consideration of this application.

Yours faithfully,

Eric James Sankhulani
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

Introductory Letter for Interview Participants

801-107 Cumberland Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK. S7N 2R6

Dear _____,

Re: A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI.

My name is *Eric James Sankhulani*, a member of staff in the University of Malawi, the Polytechnic. I am currently working towards a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

I am conducting a study that will examine *The Nature of Autonomy in the University of Malawi*. Specifically, I am interested to interview members of the university community who serve (or have served) the University of Malawi in various management roles. The participants will be from Government, Council, University Office, College Principals, Deans, and Heads of Department. I plan to conduct a one-on-one confidential interviews, in such areas as Government/University interface, and academic/personnel/student/financial affairs. This interview should not last more than 60 minutes.

I am looking for those who have served the University of Malawi in an administrative role (as described in paragraph 2) and are willing to share their experience with me. Your name has been identified as a possible participant. However, participation is completely voluntary, and if you participate in an interview, I will strive to protect your confidentiality.

If you are interested in participating, I would be very pleased to organize a time to sit down with you and chat. Please send me a quick email at ejs736@mail.usask.ca or give me a call at (306) 374-3885. If you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email as well or you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, at (306) 966-7612).

I hope to hear from you soon.

Best Regards,

Eric James Sankhulani.
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E

Letter of Consent for Interview Participants

Dear _____

My name is Eric James Sankhulani, a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan. I will be conducting my doctoral research through the department of Educational Administration. The study is on *The Nature of Autonomy in the University of Malawi*. This study will focus on the institutional autonomy in the university in the post multi-party politics in Malawi at the three levels, the university office, the college, and the departmental levels. For the purposes of this study, the participants are delimited to those who hold (or held) administrative positions in the University of Malawi at various levels including Council, Government, University Office and Colleges.

To achieve my goal, I will adhere to the following guidelines designed to protect the interests of everyone taking part:

1. I will interview you to discuss your current perception of autonomy in the University of Malawi. As we are now in this multi-party system of government, I do not envision any risk to you as a result of participating in this study.
2. You will be interviewed one-on-one, for roughly a maximum of an hour. The interview will be audio-recorded and you will be free to turn off the tape recorder at any time during the interview.
3. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time without fear of penalty or reprisal by the University of Saskatchewan. If you choose to withdraw, the audio recordings, transcripts, and interview data will be destroyed.
4. Each audio recording will be transcribed and analyzed to discover major themes as we discussed. You will be presented with a 'smoothed narrative' version of the transcript – where false starts, repetitions, and paralinguistic utterances are removed to improve readability. You will be asked to check the transcription to clarify and add information, so as to construct the meanings and interpretations that become 'data' for later interpretation by myself as a researcher. You may delete anything you do not wish to be quoted within the study.
5. Any data/audio recordings and the results of this study will become the property of the research and will be securely stored with Dr. Patrick Renihan, Head of the Department of Educational Administration, College of

Education, University of Saskatchewan, and retained for a minimum of five years in accordance with University Council guidelines.

6. Your confidentiality will be protected through the use of pseudonyms and thus will not affect your present position in the University of Malawi. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. However, although all possible safeguards will be used to protect your anonymity, the smallness of the University of Malawi prevents complete anonymity in all situations. The use of pseudonyms will protect your identity from outsiders, but your colleagues may know of your involvement in the study.
7. The results of the study will be disseminated in the form of a Doctoral Dissertation and may be published as an article in a scholarly journal or presented at a conference.
8. Any questions regarding your rights as participant may be addressed to the following:

Researcher:

Eric James Sankhulani
(306) 374-3885 (h)
(306) 966-7678 (o)
(306) 966-7020 (fax)
ejs736@mail.usask.ca,

Supervisor:

Dr. Murray Scharf
(306) 374-0874 (h)
(306) 966-7612 (o)
(306) 966-7020 (fax)
murrayscharf@usask.ca

I, _____, understand the guidelines above and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Participant's signature

Date:

Researcher's signature

Eric James Sankhulani

APPENDIX F

Interview Guides

Interview Guide for Council Members

I. Introduction

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How did you find yourself in this role? How long have you served on the University Committee?

II. Personnel Affairs

What role do you play in the recruitment of university staff – both academic and administrative?

III. Academic Affairs

What role do you play in maintaining the academic standards of the university?

IV. Student Affairs

What role do you play in the selection and discipline of students in the university?

V. Financial Affairs

What role do you play in the funding of the university.

VII. General

1. With respect to running the affairs of the University, what influence is exerted by:
 - the Government?
 - the University Council?
2. What is your perspective on the relationship between UNIMA:
 - higher administrative authorities?
 - the Government?
3. As a Government Official/Council Member, what role can the Government/Council play to improve the running of UNIMA?
4. Would you like to see the UNIMA run differently? If YES, why? If NO, why not?
5. Any other comments?

Interview Guide for University-Level Officials

I. General Information

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. Please give me a general description of the internal organization of the university.
3. How important is university autonomy to you?

II. General Autonomy

1. What is the relationship between the Government and the University in terms of university governance?
2. General freedom to decide: Can you determine (without prior approval by state government) your own external contacts and contracts? With foreign institutions of higher education?
3. Exercise of the freedom to decide: How do you practice your administrative and academic authority in the University under the present political leadership?

III. Personnel Affairs

1. Could you please describe the process of appointing administrators of various levels in the university? For example:
 - Pro VC;
 - University Registrar;
 - University Finance Officer;
 - College Principals.
2. What role do you play in these appointments? What role should you play?
3. What is the process of university promotions, and to what extent does the university have autonomy in this process?
4. To what extent is the university free to determine any differentiation they wish in their categories of academic staff?
5. To what extent is the university free to appoint academic staff (all categories) – i.e. are there approval/selection procedures carried out by external bodies?

6. To what extent is the university free to decide on the desired teaching qualifications for academic staff without government setting the minimum requirements?
7. To what extent is university free to determine the salaries of their personnel or are the scales determined by government?

IV. Academic Affairs

1. How does the university determine academic disciplines and the programmes to be taught?
2. To what extent is the university free to decide what courses they offer at the level of disciplines or are there procedures before a College can start a new discipline?
3. To what extent is the university free to decide the content of their course – i.e. are there centrally regulated minimum requirements for the content of curricula or curriculum approval procedures?
4. Whose methods are used to ensure quality – the university's or government's?

V. Student Affairs

1. How are students recruited into the university?
2. To what extent can the university determine its own entrance capacity (i.e. numbers of students enrolling?)
3. What is the process of the selection of new students?
4. To what extent can the university decide on the level of tuition and fees or are the figures set by state government?
5. How do you maintain student discipline in the University?

VI. Financial Affairs

1. What is the character of the state government appropriation: is it a lump sum or an earmarked budget?
2. How does the university allocate the funding? Could you please give some examples?
3. Are there, besides the basic appropriation, significant earmarked funds for, e.g. innovation, specific projects, etc?
4. To what extent can the university be allowed to borrow money from financial institutions, e.g. the banks?

5. To what extent is the university free to determine its activities with regard to commercial teaching and research contracts or are these subject to prior approval? Does (some of) the profit have to be transferred to the government?

VII. Further Information

1. From your perspective, do you think any type of reforms should take place in the University?

For example: in such areas as

- university-government relationship, and
- the governance structure within universities.

2. Are there any documents regarding the above topics that might be of value to my research that I might have copies of?

Interview Guide for College Principals

I. General Information

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. Please give me a general description of the internal organization of the university.
3. How important is university autonomy to you?

II. General Autonomy

1. What is the relationship between the Government and the University in terms of university governance?
2. *General freedom to decide*: Can you determine (without prior approval by state government) your own external contacts and contracts? With foreign institutions of higher education?
3. *Exercise of the freedom to decide*: How do you practice your administrative and academic authority in the University under the present political leadership?

III. Personnel Affairs

1. Could you please describe the process of appointing administrators of various levels in the University/College? For example:
 - Deans;
 - Heads of Department;
 - Directors;
 - Registrars;
 - College Finance Officers.
2. What role do you play in these appointments? What role should you play?
3. What is the process of recruiting faculty members? Process of their promotion? To what extent do you have autonomy in these processes?
4. To what extent is the university/college free to determine any differentiation they wish in their categories of academic staff?
5. To what extent is the university/college free to appoint academic staff (all categories) – i.e. are there approval/selection procedures carried out by external bodies?

6. To what extent is the university/college free to decide on the desired teaching qualifications for academic staff without government setting the minimum requirements?

7. To what extent is university/college free to determine the salaries of their personnel or are the scales determined by government?

IV. Academic Affairs

1. How does the university determine academic disciplines and the programmes to be taught?

2. To what extent is the university/college free to decide what courses they offer at the level of disciplines or are there procedures before a College can start a new discipline?

3. To what extent is the university/college free to decide the content of their course – i.e. are there centrally regulated minimum requirements for the content of curricula or curriculum approval procedures?

4. Whose methods are used to ensure quality – the university's or government's?

V. Student Affairs

1. How are students recruited into the university/college?

2. To what extent can the university/college determine its own entrance capacity (i.e. numbers of students enrolling?)

3. What is the process of the selection of new students?

4. To what extent can the university/college decide on the level of tuition and fees or are the figures set by state government?

5. How do you maintain student discipline in the University?

VI. Financial Affairs

1. What is the character of the state government appropriation: is it a lump sum or an earmarked budget?

2. How does the university/college allocate the funding? Could you please give some examples?

3. Are there, besides the basic appropriation, significant earmarked funds for, e.g. innovation, specific projects, etc?

4. To what extent can the University/College to generate funding by itself and make use of the self-generated funds freely?

5. To what extent can the university/college be allowed to borrow money from financial institutions, e.g. the banks?

6. To what extent is the university/college free to determine its activities with regard to commercial teaching and research contracts or are these subject to prior approval? Does (some of) the profit have to be transferred to Government/University Office?

VII. Further Information

1. From your perspective, do you think any type of reforms should take place in the University?

For example: in such areas as

- university-government relationship, and
- the governance structure within universities.

2. Are there any documents regarding the above topics that might be of value to my research that I might have copies of?

Interview Guide for Faculty Deans

I. Introduction

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.

II. Personnel Affairs

2. Could you please give me a brief description of the personnel administration in the Faculty?

For example:

- recruitment of faculty and staff
- promotion
- determination of salary levels, etc.

III. Academic Affairs

3. Please give me a brief description of the academic decisions in the Faculty.

For example:

- determination of disciplines and programmes
- academic/student assessments
- determination of textbooks, etc

IV. Student Affairs

4. Please give me a brief information on students in your faculty.

For example:

- how are students selected in your faculty?
- how is the level determined?
- what role do you play as a Dean in student selection?

V. Finance Affairs

5. Please give me a brief description of how funds are managed in the Faculty.

For example:

- what is the source of funds for your Faculty?
- do you control your own budget?
- how is the budget allocated?
- are you free to determine activities with regard to funds allocation?

VI. General

6. From your perspective, do you think any type of reforms should take place in the Faculty? In the university?

For example: in such areas as:

- governance structures within the university
- university-government relationship
- etc

7. Are there any documents regarding the above topics that might be of value to my research that I might have copies of?

Interview Guide for Department Heads

I. Introduction

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. Please give me a general description of the internal organization of your department.

II. Personnel Affairs

3. What role do you play in the appointment of College administrative staff? Dismissal?
4. Could you please describe the process of recruiting new Faculty members in the department?
5. What role do you play in the promotion of Faculty members? Salary level?

III. Academic Affairs

6. Who determines: the curriculum, teaching methods, examining, textbook selection?
7. Who is responsible for academic standards, e.g. quality of teaching?

IV. Student Affairs

8. What is the role of your department in student recruitment? Pass or fail?
9. How do you maintain the discipline of students in the department?

V. Financial Affairs

10. Where does the department funding come from?
11. Is it possible for your department to generate funding by yourself and make use of the self-generated funding freely? If YES, how? If NO, why not?

VI. General

12. Could you please explain the relationship between College administration and your department regarding the decision-making in the College?
13. From your perspective, do you think any reforms should take place in the University of Malawi?

For example: in such areas as

- university-government relationship
- the governance structure within universities.

14. Are there any documents regarding the above topics that might be of value to my research that I might have copies of?

Interview Guide for Regulatory Bodies: *The Medical Association of Malawi*

Introduction:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How do you find yourself in this role?

Your Organization: The Medical Association of Malawi (MAM).

3. What role does your organization play in the medical field in Malawi?
4. What is the connection between your organization and the University of Malawi?
5. MAM should be interested with some of the UNIMA colleges. What influence is exerted by your organization on UNIMA?
6. What role can MAM play to improve the quality of programmes of UNIMA?
7. Under what circumstances would your organization fund UNIMA?
8. How would you characterize your relationship between your organization (MAM) and UNIMA?
9. It has been suggested that as a regulatory body, you interfere with the autonomy of your member bodies like COM. Can you please comment on this allegation?

Interview Guide for Regulatory Bodies: *The Nurses Council of Malawi*

Introduction:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How do you find yourself in this role?

Your Organization: The Nurses Council of Malawi (NCM).

3. What role does your organization play in the medical field in Malawi?
4. What is the connection between your organization and the University of Malawi?
5. NCM should be interested with some of the UNIMA colleges. What influence is exerted by your organization on UNIMA?
6. Do you have any working relationship with Medical Association of Malawi?
7. What role can NCM play to improve the quality of programmes of UNIMA?
8. Under what circumstances would you see your organization funding UNIMA?
9. How would you characterize the relationship between your organization (NCM) and UNIMA?
10. It has been suggested that as a regulatory body, you interfere with the autonomy of your member bodies like KCN. Can you please comment on this allegation?

Interview Guide for Regulatory Bodies: *The Institute of Engineers*

Introduction:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How do you find yourself in this role?

Your Organization: The Institute of Engineers (IOE).

3. What role does your organization play in the engineering field in Malawi?
4. What is the connection between your organization and the University of Malawi?
5. IOE should be interested with some of the UNIMA colleges. What influence is exerted by your organization (IOE) on UNIMA?
6. What role can IOE play to improve the quality of programmes of UNIMA?
7. Under what circumstances would you see your organization funding UNIMA?
8. How would you characterize the relationship between your organization (IOE) and UNIMA?
9. It has been suggested that as a regulatory body, you interfere with the autonomy of your member bodies like UNIMA. Can you please comment on this allegation?

Interview Guide for Regulatory Bodies: *The Law Association of Malawi*

Introduction:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How do you find yourself in this role?

Your Organization: The Law Association of Malawi (LAM)

3. What role does your organization play in the law field in Malawi?
4. What is the connection between your organization and the University of Malawi?
5. LAM should be interested with some of the UNIMA colleges – Chancellor College. What influence is exerted by your organization (LAM) on UNIMA?
6. What role can LAM play to improve the quality of programmes of UNIMA?
7. Under what circumstances would you see your organization funding UNIMA?
8. How would you characterize the relationship between your organization (LAM) and UNIMA?
9. It has been suggested that as a regulatory body, you interfere with the autonomy of your member bodies like UNIMA. Can you please comment on this allegation?

Interview Guide for Politicians: *Parliamentary Committee on Education*

Introduction:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How do you find yourself in this role?

Your Organization: The Parliamentary Committee on Education (PCEd).

3. What role does your committee play in the education sector in Malawi?
4. What is the connection between your committee (PCEd) and the University of Malawi?
5. PCEd should be interested in the UNIMA. What influence is exerted by your committee (PCEd) on the University of Malawi ?
6. What role can PCEd play to improve the quality of programmes of UNIMA?
7. How would you characterize the relationship between your committee (PCEd) and UNIMA?
8. UNIMA is a government-funded institution. For the past 5 years, say, it has not received a full share of its budgetary request. Why can't government allow UNIMA to charge economic fees?
9. It has been suggested that as a Parliamentary Committee on Education, you interfere with the autonomy of the University of Malawi. They fail to operate, as they feel professionally prudent, especially the issue of charging tuition fees. Can you please comment on this observation?

Interview Guide for Government Officials

Introduction

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. How did you find yourself in this role? How long have you served on the University Committee?

Personnel Affairs

3. What role do you play in the recruitment of university staff – both academic and administrative?

Academic Affairs

4. What role do you play in maintaining the academic standards of UNIMA?
5. Does Government have a higher education policy in Malawi?
If so, can I have a copy?
6. There are quite a number of private Universities, which have been established in the country in the past 5 years. Why such a sudden development?
7. What is the role of Government in these universities in terms of:
 - Funding;
 - Quality standards;
 - Accreditation;
 - etc

Student Affairs

8. What role do you play in the selection and discipline of students in the university?
9. What is government's policy on University admissions?

Financial Affairs

10. What role do you play in the funding of the university?
11. Why do you deal with Colleges directly instead of dealing with them through the University Office?

General

12. With respect to running the affairs of the University, what influence is exerted by:
 - the Government?
 - the University Council?
13. What is your perspective on the relationship between UNIMA and the Government?

14. As a Government Official, what role can the Government play to improve the running of UNIMA?

15. Would you like to see the UNIMA run differently? If YES, why? If NO, why not?

Interview Guide Other Universities

I. General Information

1. Please tell me something about yourself:
 - Your current position;
 - Your specific responsibilities in your current position.
2. Please give me a general description of the internal organization of the university.
3. How important is university autonomy to you?

II. General Autonomy

4. What is the relationship between the Government and the University in terms of university governance?
5. *General freedom to decide*: Can you determine (without prior approval by state government) your own external contacts and contracts? With foreign institutions of higher education?
6. *Exercise of the freedom to decide*: How do you practice your administrative and academic authority in the University under the present political leadership?

III. Personnel Affairs

7. Could you please describe the process of appointing administrators of various levels in the university? For example:
 - Pro VC;
 - University Registrar;
 - University Finance Officer;
 - College Principals.
8. What role do you play in these appointments? What role should you play?
9. What is the process of university promotions, and to what extent does the university have autonomy in this process?
10. To what extent is the university free to determine any differentiation they wish in their categories of academic staff?
11. To what extent is the university free to appoint academic staff (all categories) – i.e. are there approval/selection procedures carried out by external bodies?

12. To what extent is the university free to decide on the desired teaching qualifications for academic staff without government setting the minimum requirements?

13. To what extent is university free to determine the salaries of their personnel or are the scales determined by government?

IV. Academic Affairs

14. How does the university determine academic disciplines and the programmes to be taught?

15. To what extent is the university free to decide what courses they offer at the level of disciplines or are there procedures before a College can start a new discipline?

16. To what extent is the university free to decide the content of their course – i.e. are there centrally regulated minimum requirements for the content of curricula or curriculum approval procedures?

17. Whose methods are used to ensure quality – the university's or government's?

V. Student Affairs

18. How are students recruited into the university?

19. To what extent can the university determine its own entrance capacity (i.e. numbers of students enrolling?)

20. What is the process of the selection of new students?

21. To what extent can the university decide on the level of tuition and fees or are the figures set by state government?

22. How do you maintain student discipline in the University?

VI. Financial Affairs

23. What is the character of the state government appropriation: is it a lump sum or an earmarked budget?

24. How does the university allocate the funding? Could you please give some examples?

25. Are there, besides the basic appropriation, significant earmarked funds for, e.g. innovation, specific projects, etc?

26. To what extent can the university be allowed to borrow money from financial institutions, e.g. the banks?

27. To what extent is the university free to determine its activities with regard to commercial teaching and research contracts or are these subject to prior approval? Does (some of) the profit have to be transferred to the government?

VII. Further Information

28. From your perspective, do you think any type of reforms should take place in the University?

For example: in such areas as

- university-government relationship, and
- the governance structure within universities.

29. Are there any documents regarding the above topics that might be of value to my research that I might have copies of?

APPENDIX G

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A Survey of the Autonomy of the University of Malawi*

Please respond by indicating the details of University of Malawi autonomy; that is, for each statement, 1) whether government has legal authority to intervene and, 2) the extent of influence in practice. *[Place a tick() in the appropriate column]*

I. Governance Matters

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Membership of the governing council of UNIMA								
Control of governing council								
Membership of academic boards								
Control of academic boards								
Control of student associations								

II. Administration Matters

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Student numbers								
Student numbers in particular fields								
Closure or amalgamation of departments								
Titles of awards								
Length of courses								
Duration of academic year								
University rules and regulations								

III. Finance Matters

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Financial audit								
University budget								
Approval of commercial or money making Ventures								
Approval of major capital expenditure								
Level of tuition fees								
Financial aid to students								

IV. Personnel Matters

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Appointment of VC								
Dismissal of VC								
Appointment of senior academic staff								
Dismissal of senior academic staff								
Appointment of other academic staff								
Termination or discipline of academic staff								
Academic tenure								
Appointment or dismissal of general staff								
Academic pay and conditions								

V. Academic Matters

a. Curriculum and Teaching

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Methods of teaching								
Methods of examination								
Introduction of new teaching fields								
Termination of teaching fields								
Curriculum within fields								
Selection of textbooks								

b. Academic Standards

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Entry standards of students								
Graduation standards								
Standards in particular subjects								
Quality audits								
Accreditation of institutions								

c. Research and Publication

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Research priorities								
Particular research topics								
Approval of publications								
Restrictions on public statements by academic staff								

VI. Students

	1. Govt. has legal				2. Govt. does exert significant influence			
	Yes	Unclear	No		Never	Only rarely	From time to time	Often
Entry standards								
Methods of selection and admission of Students								
Pass and failure rates								
Discipline for students								

VII. Overall

UNIMA Mission:

To advance knowledge, promote wisdom and understanding and provide services by engaging in teaching and research and by facilitating the dissemination, promotion and preservation of learning responsive to the needs of Malawi and the world. (Source: UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2005-2010)

Given the mission of the university, do you think that government intervention is:	Excessive in the extreme	Somewhat excessive	Slightly excessive	Not unreasonable	Insufficient
Place a tick () in appropriate column					

Other Comments

Thank you for your assistance.

APPENDIX H

Data/Transcript Release Form for Interview Participants

Dear _____,

I very much appreciate your participation in the study, *A Study of the Nature of Autonomy in the University of Malawi*. Enclosed find a transcript of my interview with you. Please review it and make any additions, deletions or suggestions to ensure accuracy or coherence so that you feel the transcripts accurately depict what you wish to communicate. When you are satisfied with the contents, please fill your name below, read the paragraphs that follow and sign where indicated.

I, _____, have reviewed the completed transcript of my personal interview and acknowledge that the transcripts accurately reflect what I said in my interview(s) with Eric James Sankhulani.

I authorize the researcher to use the information I have provided for this study.

I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Eric J. Sankhulani to be used in the manner described in the letter of consent.

I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records. My signature indicates that I have read, understood, and agree to the content of this form.

Participant's signature:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX I

Ethics Committee Approval Letters

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN: BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

<http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics.shtml>

NAME: Pat Renihan (Eric Sankhulani)
219

Beh# 04-

Educational Administration

DATE: February 15, 2005

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the Application for Ethics Approval for your study “The nature of the institutional autonomy in the University of Malawi” (Beh 04-219).

1. Your study has been APPROVED.
2. Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.
3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.
4. This approval is valid for one year. A status report form must be submitted annually to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board in order to extend approval. This certificate will automatically be invalidated if a status report form is not received within one month of the anniversary date. Please refer to the website for further instructions <http://www.usask.ca/research/behavrsc.shtml>

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Dr. Valerie Thompson, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

VT/es

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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UNIVERSITY OFFICE
P.O. BOX 278
ZOMBA
MALAWI

Ref: 1/12/3/12/1

24th December 2004

Mr E.J. Sankhulani
The Polytechnic
University of Malawi
Private Bag 303
Chichiri, Blantyre 3
MALAWI

Dear Mr Sankhulani,

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON “A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF AUTONOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI.”

We refer to your application regarding clearance to conduct research, bearing the above title, within the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, towards the PhD degree which you are pursuing at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

We are pleased to advise that your research proposal “**A Study of the Nature of Autonomy in the University of Malawi**” has been approved for implementation in the next twelve months. Your project reference in POLY/04/12/02. Please quote this reference number in all your communications. This letter should also serve as an introductory letter as you move around.

The University of Malawi has prepared an umbrella research policy which covers issues of Ethics in research. The policy is yet to be approved by Senate. However, the College Research and Publications Committee at Chancellor College has produced draft Ethics guidelines which have been used to assess your proposal. The guidelines are compatible

with the Belmont Report as the international code of ethics to whose protocol researchers are required to adhere. I attach these guidelines for your individual use.

It is expected that following the completion of research, you will submit to the University Research Coordinator three copies of your final reports or publications to be distributed as follows: one copy to be sent to the University Library, one to the Management Centre at the Polytechnic, and one to the National Archives in Zomba.

We wish you success as you embark on this research.

Yours sincerely,



Dr E.Y. Sambo
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CO-ORDINATOR, AND
SECRETARY,
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

CC: Vice Chancellor
Pro-Vice Chancellor
University Registrar
University Finance Officer

Head, management Centre, Polytechnic

APPENDIX J

DOCUMENTS USED DURING THE STUDY

A. Documents from Within UNIMA

Malawi Government Gazette (1974): *The University of Malawi Act and Statutes, incorporating the amended Act of 1998*. Government Printer, Zomba, Malawi.

Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) Report (1997): *University of Malawi Reform Study*. Unpublished University Document.

University of Malawi (1996): *Criteria for Promotion and Award of Merit Increments*. Unpublished University Office Document.

University of Malawi (2002): *Malawi Polytechnic Strategic Plan, 2002-2006*; Unpublished University Document.

University of Malawi (2005): *College of Medicine Strategic Plan, 2005-2008*; Unpublished University Document.

University of Malawi (2005): *Strategic Plan, 2005-2010*; Unpublished University Document.

B. Documents from Outside UNIMA

Malawi Government (2002): *Procedures and Guidelines for the Conduct of Research in Malawi*. National Research Council of Malawi Document; Unpublished.

Malawi Government (2003): *Procedures and Guidelines for the National Research Grants Scheme*. National Research Council of Malawi Document; Unpublished.

Malawi Government Gazette (1965): Chapter 3:04 - *Legal Education and Legal Practitioners Act, 1965*. Government Printer, Zomba, Malawi.

- Malawi Government Gazette (1974): Chapter 53:03 - Engineers Act, 1989. Government Printer, Zomba, Malawi.
- Malawi Government Gazette (1982): *Malawi Accountancy Board Act*. Government Printer, Zomba, Malawi.
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- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2001): *Policy and Investment Framework (PIF)*. Unpublished Government Document.
- The Medical Council of Malawi (1990): *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*. Unpublished Document.
- The Society of Accountants in Malawi (SOCAM)*, (1997): Information Booklet.
- University of Mzuzu (1999): *Commemorative Issue Marking the Official Opening*. Published by Mzuzu University Publications, Mzuzu, Malawi.
- University of Mzuzu: *Criteria for Promotion of Academic Staff, Paper No. 148, Ref.: MU/1/P1.04*. University Document; Unpublished.
- University of Mzuzu: *Criteria for Promotion and Award of Merit Salary Increments for Administrative Staff, Paper No. 293*. University Document; Unpublished.

